

## Nightmares and Bruises by imagingmarvelandeverything

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**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Reader, Billy Hargrove/You

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**Summary:**

Y/N and Billy both have different reasons to be out this late, but they will be glad to find each other. (fluff, angst, gets kinda steamy, follows season 2 and 3)

# 1. Nightmares and Bruises

## Notes for the Chapter:

Warning: Mentions of abuse

A/N: BTW I do not condone any of Billy's behaviour in stranger things. This was originally a request on tumblr but I've decided to move everything onto here as well.

For the past year, ever since Steve had dragged her to Jonathan's to confront Nancy and they had battled the Demogorgon, Y/N had suffered from awful nightmares. They were always some variation of the same thing. It always involved the Demogorgon and always someone she loved getting hurt or even killed. Steve, Nancy and Jonathan had all told her that they didn't experience the same thing and she wondered why it just affected her. Even the kids seemed perfectly fine considering what had happened. The only person who seemed to suffer the same way as her was Will, which was to be expected considering everything he had gone through while being stuck in the upside down.

Y/N's parents both worked for Hawkins Lab and had assured her multiple times that the old people had gone and that nothing like the events of the previous winter would ever happen again. However, it did nothing to reassure her. Her parents worked nights at the lab most of the time and were hardly ever home when she was. Most of the time all she got was a brief phone call to check up and make sure everything was alright. When she was home alone the nightmares seemed to get worse. She would wake up in cold sweats, breathing hard and sometimes crying.

This night was one of those. Trembling, Y/N swung her legs out of bed and placed her head in her hands as she tried to slow her breathing down. They always felt so real, like it was actually happening. She shakily got dressed and left the house after locking the door. Sometimes the only thing that would ground her was going out for a short walk. Nights in Hawkins were always peaceful and it helped her to clear her head. The cold air helped her calm down but

it also managed to penetrate straight through her thin hoodie. She wrapped her arms around her as her converse crunched on the loose gravel that covered the road in some places. A soft breeze swirled the autumn leaves around her feet and into the air as she walked down the road. The cold weather truly had arrived and with it came the memories of the previous year.

As the temperature dropped further, she hid her hands in her hoodie and jumped as the sound of a car engine roared through the silence. She moved to the side of the road for the car to pass but, to her surprise, it pulled up beside her. She recognised the blue Camaro straight away.

“Y/N, right?” Billy Hargrove said with his usual grin plastered across its face, although right now it didn’t seem to quite reach his eyes.

She nodded her head and bit down on her lip. Billy’s grin grew but there was still something underlying it that she couldn’t quite put her finger on.

“What you doing out this late in the cold, princess?” The nickname seemed to just roll off his tongue.

Y/N and Billy knew of each other but had never actually spoken before. That was mainly down to the fact that he was total ass to Steve and always had a gaggle of girls surrounding him, giggling and twirling their hair.

Y/N shrugged. “Couldn’t sleep.” She noticed a bruise beginning to form under Billy’s cheekbone, it was faint at the moment but she knew when it came out properly it wouldn’t be pretty to look at.

“Want to come for a drive? I’d rather not leave you out in the cold.” He reached across and opened the door. “You shouldn’t be out here alone, it’s dangerous.”

Realising that he was probably right and that there was little chance of him actually turning out to be an axe murderer, she climbed into the Camaro. The warmth from the inside of the car immediately engulfed her and she sank further into the seat as Billy set off.

"Anywhere particular you wanted to go, princess?" Billy asked, glancing at the girl in his passenger seat.

"Not really." She looked out of the window as he turned on the radio and Rebel Yell by Billy Idol flooded the car. "What happened to your cheek?"

Billy glanced across at her again but her gaze was still fixed out of the window. "It's nothing."

"Is it the reason you're out this late?" Y/N asked, finally turning to look over at the blond.

"We've all got our demons, princess." Was his response and she didn't press him further. He knew most people would have; his friends often to demanded who he had beat in a fight and girls usually wanted to hear some heroic story about why he had been fighting. However, the truth was much darker than he ever told anyone. He was suddenly very glad it was Y/N he had found wandering by the road and not anyone else from the hell of a school.

They drove around aimlessly for a few hours, talking every so often and then letting the music fill the silence the rest of the time. It wasn't awkward at any point, like Y/N had been expecting, there seemed to be a silent understanding between them that whatever this was, was just to be confined to his car in the late nights they both needed an escape.

As Billy drove up to her house he glanced at the empty driveway. "Where're your parents?"

"At work. They work nights most nights so it's just me." Y/N explained as she opened the door. "Thanks for the ride." She smiled softly.

"Anytime, princess." He returned the smile as she closed the car door and walked up to her front door. Billy stayed to make sure she got inside before throwing the car into reverse and driving off.

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Their late-night drives occurred frequently over following next

month. Y/N would wake from a nightmare and go for a walk to clear her head. Most times Billy would pull up next to her at some point throughout the night with fresh bruises and they would go for a drive. It was always like the first night; they would talk and listen to music. Neither of them ever explained what made them need to get out for a while and neither of them pushed the other for answers. They didn't speak any other time. The most they would do was throw quick glances at each other in school, a way of checking up on each other when they couldn't get away to talk. Their conversation and friendship were limited to the inside of Billy's car. Neither of them really minded. They found an escape in each other.

However, one night the normality of their meetings was broken. Y/N was, for once, sleeping peacefully, when there was a knock on her window. Sleepily she had sat up and would have gone back to sleep blaming it on her imagination if it hadn't sounded again. She walked over to the window, opened the curtains and looked eyes with those familiar blue irises. She opened the window as she took in his face. There were bruises all over his face but unlike usually, his nose was also bleeding, his lip and eyebrow were split and there were bruises visible under his ripped shirt.

"Billy?" She questioned as he started to climb through the window and nearly fell, causing her to grab onto his biceps to steady him.

"Hey, princess." He muttered as he winced in pain.

"What happened?"

"My dad didn't like the way I was talking to my step-mom, or the way I yelled at him about it." He told her as she helped him sit on the bed. "I didn't know where else to go." He whispered as he locked his eyes onto his hands.

"It's okay. I'm going to get the first aid kit." Y/N motioned for him to stay put. She went into the bathroom and grabbed the first aid kit with shaking hands.

She walked back into the room, sat next to him and started pulling things out of the kit. Billy turned to look at her and noticed her shaking fingers as she tried to pour some alcohol onto some cotton

wool. He placed his hands over hers and she stopped shaking and looked at him. He nodded reassuringly and she began to clean the cuts on his face. She then pulled out the tea tree oil and gently rubbed a small amount into the bruises on his face. She hoped it would ease the swelling and bring out the bruises faster so they could heal quicker.

“Could you...?” She trailed off as she gestured to his tattered shirt; unable to meet his gaze.

He just nodded and pulled it off. He winced as he did so, trying to recall the last time it had been this bad. Her hands started shaking again as she rubbed the ointment into the bruises on his chest and then on his back. She packed the kit away and just put it on the floor next to her bed. “Do you...” She took a breath to steady herself. “Do you want to sleep here tonight?”

“If you don’t mind.” His voice was still horse and shaky.

“Of course not.” She murmured as she climbed into bed. He kicked off his shoes and climbed in next to her as she switched off the light.

“Thank you.” He whispered as they started to drift off.

“Anytime.”

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Him coming over in the middle of the night after a fight with his dad started to become regular occurrence. Not once did he look as bad as the first time and each time she was glad of it. She hated to see him hurt. Her parents had begun to work more nights at the lab lately so she was always glad for Billy’s company in the otherwise empty house. It seemed with Billy by her side, the nightmares didn’t have the courage to attack. Billy had found a place where he actually felt safe and was reluctant to give it up anytime soon. They still didn’t talk at school but glances had evolved into smiles when they saw one another. Other people were beginning to catch onto them but no one ever saw them together. It had led to rumours and whispering in the halls whenever they passed one another. Neither of them particularly cared.

“You know my house has a door? You don’t always have to use the window. Especially when my parents aren’t home.” Y/N smiled as Billy climbed into her room from the darkness outside.

“Where’s the fun in that, princess?” He chuckled. There were small bruises in the shape of finger prints on each of his biceps. He sat on the bed as she grabbed a small bottle of tea tree oil that she now kept in her bedside table. No matter how many times he told her it didn’t matter, she wouldn’t listen so he had just started giving up and letting her put the ointment on the bruises.

“You staying?” She asked as she rubbed the ointment into each bruise on his arms.

“If that’s alright?”

“Always.” She smiled.

As she put the bottle away, he pulled off his shirt, kicked off his shoes and trousers and got into the bed. After the first few times he had just started sleeping in his boxer shorts. It was much comfier and she had assured him that she really didn’t mind. She climbed in next to him and laid her head on his chest. One of her legs was thrown over his hips and her hand rested on his necklace right above his heart. One of his arms was wrapped firmly around her and the other played lazily with her hair. They had gotten used to sleeping in a tangle of limbs pretty quickly and now neither of them would have it any other way.

Y/N very quickly dropped off to sleep, exhaustion from the nightmares that had plagued her the previous night finally taking over. Billy looked at her sleeping peacefully on his chest. He had tried so hard not to fall for her. Had tried so hard to convince himself they were just friends. But as he looked at her slowly moving with the rise and fall of his chest he realised it; he was well and truly in deep. He loved her.

## 2. Mornings and Unwanted News

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Mentions of abuse

Y/N was woken by the bright morning light streaming through the window. She squinted towards the light's source. She cursed herself for not closing the curtains after Billy had climbed through the previous night which had now led to an early awakening on a Saturday morning. She groaned and lazily went to move to close them. She was prevented from doing so by the arm that tightened around her waist and pulled her back against Billy's bare chest. He buried his head in her hair and inhaled. She smelled like vanilla and it instantly calmed him down.

"Can't we just lay here for a minute?" Billy's morning voice was rough but she couldn't get enough of it.

"I was only going to shut the curtains."

Billy's grip seemed to tighten comfortably around her and she didn't try to get up again; only turned over and buried her head in his chest to get away from the light. He smiled doily and kissed the top of her head as she curled into him. Neither of them wanted to get up and neither of them had too. Compared to most mornings when they would have to rush to school, it was a nice change. They continued to lie in each other's warmth until Y/N's alarm sounded telling them it was nine o'clock. She sat up and slammed off the alarm before turning to look at Billy who was now laid on his back looking at her with a smile.

"What?" She asked as she ran a hand through her tangled hair.

"Nothing. I just think you look cute in the morning." He replied his eyes trained on her every movement as she climbed out of bed and threw on her dressing gown.

"I don't think anyone's ever said that to me before." Y/N muttered and looked at the floor.

“Well they should have.” Billy smiled, not one of his lopsided smirks, no, a real smile. The last person to have seen him truly smile had been his mother. He thought she would have liked Y/N.

Y/N gave him a small smile in return and locked her eyes onto the carpet as she tucked her hair behind her ear. “You hungry?”

“Starving, princess.” Billy climbed out of the bed and pulled his button up shirt on before following her downstairs.

Y/N pulled out the eggs and some ham. She began preparing an omelette as Billy leaned against the counter and watched with a smile on his face. She hummed to herself as she moved throughout the kitchen pulling out everything she needed. Billy’s eyes followed her every movement. Y/N had very quickly become his safety blanket and he believed that was one of the things that had caused him to fall for her. He found himself imagining what it would be like to share an apartment with her, to get to watch her cook every day, maybe dance around the kitchen with her late at night when neither of them could sleep, to wake up next to her every morning and not have to worry about his dad ever again.

“You got any plans today?” She questioned as she skilfully flipped the omelette and then dropped the toast down in the toaster. She pulled Billy out of his daydream rather abruptly and it took him a second to realise what she had asked.

“No. Not really.”

“You want to stay and watch a movie?” Y/N asked and she kept her back to him so he wouldn’t notice the slight blush that was spreading up her neck to her cheeks.

“Sure, princess.” He smiled widely at the idea.

She returned the smile as she cut the omelette in half and handed him his piece on a plate. They spent most of the day on the sofa watching various movies and just enjoying each other’s company. That was until the shrill tones of the phone rang out in the late afternoon. Thinking that it would just be her parents, Y/N shot up to answer it

“Y/N?” Steve’s voice drifted over the line.

“Steve?” The confusion was evident in her tone as Billy turned the TV off and turned to look at her with an eyebrow raised.

“Yeah, I need you to meet me at Dustin’s.” Steve’s voice was unsteady.

“Why?” She questioned; fearing the worse. Her heart had jumped into her throat and the events of the previous year seemed to flash before her eyes. She glanced at Billy to find his blue eyes already trained on her.

“He-we think that he may have found a sort of baby Demogorgon thing.” Steve said.

“Demodog!” Dustin’s voice called in the background. She could basically feel Steve’s eyeroll over the phone.

“Where are you calling me from?”

“The Wheeler’s. I came to find Nancy and found Dustin instead.” Steve clarified.

“Okay, I’ll meet you there in 15.” Y/N assured him.

“Y/N, bring your bat.”

“Yeah, see you soon.” She placed the phone back on its stand and took a shaky breath to try and calm her beating heart. Surely Dustin was wrong. One of those things couldn’t still be this side of the gate.

Billy got up from the sofa and walked over. “Everything all right.”

“Yeah.” Y/N tried to keep her voice level but she knew Billy would be able to see through whatever façade she threw on. “Steve needs me to meet him at this kid called Dustin’s house about some science project we promised we’d help him with.” She didn’t wait for his answer, just started walking up the stairs.

He was quick on her heels. “You sure you’re okay?” Billy felt like he was walking on eggshells. He knew something was up but he didn’t

know how to ask and didn't want to force her into telling him something. Words had never been his strong suit and right now he wished they were.

"Yeah." She said as she knelt down on the floor. She reached under her bed and pulled out the bag she hadn't seen since last year out from under her bed. The stuff inside clanged as she threw it on her back. "Look, I should be back tonight." She grabbed her keys off her side and walked back downstairs; Billy still trailing after her.

"Okay. I'll come round." Billy said as she pulled her shoes on. He followed suit and followed her out of the house. "You need a lift there?" It was starting to get dark and he didn't want her out on her own. It was stupid considering he knew she went out in the middle of the night most nights when she couldn't sleep, but something about this time was unnerving him. He felt like something was hovering over them, something threatening. Her shaky demeanour wasn't helping to put his mind at rest.

She shook her head as she locked the front door before tossing her keys in her bag. "I can walk. I'll see you later." Without thinking she walked up to him and placed a kiss on his cheek. She didn't give him chance to react as she quickly walked off leaving him dumbfounded but smiling none the less in the middle of her drive.

"Yeah, see you later." His voice decreased in volume slightly as she walked off down the street.

### **3. Lost and Found**

#### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Warnings: Mentions of abuse, night terrors

Y/N made her way cautiously back to her house in the dark. Her hand wrapped tightly around her bag strap just in case something decided to jump out of the dark. She regretted not accepting Steve's offer for a lift home but she knew if she did and Billy was already waiting for her it would not end well. However, that wouldn't have been the night's biggest problem.

She had met Dustin and Steve at the Wheeler's house and Steve had driven them to Dustin's. By the time they had arrived it had already gone dark. Steve was armed with his nail bat as she pulled out her steel baseball bat. Dustin led them to the outside cellar, opened it and then proceeded to stand back for the two of them to descend into the darkness as he stayed outside. When they got down into the cellar, they noticed that Dart, as Dustin called the baby Demogorgon (if that's what it was), had managed to claw a hole in the cellar wall and had escaped into the woods. The three of them had agreed to meet in the morning to try and track Dart down. Dustin had told them to bring all the raw meat that they could find so they could lure him out.

As Y/N turned down her street, she could already see Billy sat on the hood of his Camaro with a cigarette between his lips. He was in his leather jacket and was leaning forward with his arms resting on his denim clad thighs. He looked bruise free but he seemed to be deep in thought; his eyebrows were pinched together and his eyes were glazed over. He smiled though when he saw her approaching, climbed down off his car and stamped out his cigarette. She smiled back but clutched the bag on her shoulder a little tighter just in case anything decided to jump out of the dark.

"Everything okay, princess?" Billy questioned as she reached him. Her eyes kept glancing around the vicinity as she laced her fingers through his and pulled him to the front door.

“Yeah, just let’s get inside.” She unlocked the door and ushered him inside. She glanced around once more before shutting and locking the door, and proceeding to check every lock downstairs in the house while Billy watched with his eyebrows knitted together.

Billy laid a hand on her arm to stop her as she went to check the lock on the front door again. “You sure you’re okay? You seem very... tense.”

“Yeah of course.” She smiled and turned to walk upstairs. “I just got spooked by a cat walking home.”

“You should have let me pick you up.” He told her as she replaced the bag under her side of the bed; making sure it was open in case she needed to defend herself in the night.

“Probably should have.” She muttered. “You staying?”

“If you want me too.” Billy said as he stood with his hands in his pockets.

She nodded. “Please.” She didn’t want to be alone tonight.

She kicked off her shoes and jeans and climbed into her bed. Billy watched her closely as she pulled the covers almost over her head before following suit and pulling off his shirt and kicking his shoes and jeans off. He pulled back the cover and climbed into the bed. She was facing towards her window, away from him, so he wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her into his chest. She threaded her fingers through his over her heart to assure herself that he wasn’t going anywhere. He pressed a kiss to the back of her neck as they both drifted off.

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They hadn’t been asleep long when Billy was woken by Y/N tossing and turning. Tears were streaming down her cheeks and she was shaking. “Y/N?” He shook her lightly and she shot bolt upright before looking around the room with wide eyes. Billy rested his hand on her arm and she jumped away from him. “Hey, it’s just me.” He held his hands up and she glanced from his hands to meet his crystal blue

eyes.

That was all it took and she broke down. She dug her fingers into her hair as her breathing became uneven. Billy shifted and pulled her onto his lap and held her to his chest as sobs began to rack her body. She moved her hands from her hair and wrapped them around him as she buried her face into his bare shoulder. Her legs wound around his waist as she clung to him as if her life depended on it. He tangled one hand into her hair at the back of her head and wrapped the other one around her waist, securing her against him.

Y/N tried to even out her breathing but this time she couldn't calm down. It had been so real. Steve, Nancy, Jonathan, the party, Joyce, Hopper and Billy had all been torn apart and all she could do was watch. She couldn't shake the image of Billy's lifeless body out of her head. Those beautiful blue eyes staring at her but not seeing anything.

As her sobs died down, she pulled away from him to wipe her eyes. Billy rested a hand on her waist as his other hand moved to cup her cheek. He traced his thumb over her cheekbone slowly as she looked up and met his eyes. Concern was etched across his features. "You want to talk about it?" He asked but she shook her head.

"You look beautiful right now." He said after a few minutes. There was a soft smile on his face. "I really want to kiss you right now. I know I shouldn't, and somehow that makes me want it more." He revealed and Y/N's voice caught in her throat.

With a sudden surge of confidence and the need to feel close to him, she moved her hands to the side of his face and pulled him forward. She pressed their lips together harshly. Billy responded immediately and pulled her flush against his chest. His hand moved from her face and buried into her hair. He tugged on it and caused her to part her lips. He used her reaction to his advantage and deepened the kiss. Every untold feeling and emotion from the past few months were released into the kiss all at once. She moved her hand down his neck and dug her nails into the skin of his shoulder. He hissed and nipped at her bottom lip causing her to groan.

He moved his lips down her neck as she tugged on his hair. He

growled against her before he sucked a bruise into her skin where her neck met her shoulder. "You're going to be the death of me, baby girl." He groaned.

She brought him back up to her lips as his hands found their way under her shirt and he pushed it over her head before reconnecting their lips. His lips started moving down her body again as she kept her fingers tangled in his hair. They might regret this in the morning, but right now, neither of them cared. They just needed to feel close to each other.

## 4. I Love You

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Swearing, implied smut

The early morning sunlight filtering through the curtains woke Y/N up much earlier than usual. She carefully untangled herself from Billy's grip in an attempt not to wake him. He mumbled something inaudible and shifted onto his front, burying his head into her blue pillow. She pulled on her dressing gown and grabbed some clothes before walking into the bathroom. She turned on the shower and turned to look in the mirror. She shrugged her dressing gown off and assessed the damage Billy had done. The bruise on the top of her collar bone stood out against her skin. She swore under her breath and made a mental reminder to wear a jacket that would cover it when she went to meet Steve.

She showered quickly and got dressed, hissing as she caught the bruise. She towel dried her hair and brushed her teeth before walking back into her bedroom. Billy was still sound asleep; one of his arms under the pillow and the sheets barely clinging to the top of his waist. With his back and neck exposed she could see the damage she had done. The red scratch marks and the equally as dark bruise forming. He looked peaceful like this, she thought. No worries crossing his features with his hair messily framing his face. She wanted to climb back in bed with him but she resisted and grabbed her bag from under her bed instead.

Y/N yawned as she walked into the kitchen and grabbed a breakfast bar and a glass of water. The old, grey bucket her dad kept under the sink was pulled out as she grabbed all the meat from the fridge and the freezer. She chopped it all up into various sized pieces and threw it all into the bucket. She was washing her hands when a voice behind her made her jump.

"What are you doing?" Billy's voice was still very dozy but his confused and slightly worried gaze drifted from the bucket to her quite rapidly.

The plan had been to sneak out before Billy woke up and just leave a note and the spare set of keys. However, as always, her plan seemed to backfire.

“It’s for a science project.” She lied as she dried her hands.

“With a shit tonne of raw meat?” He raised an eyebrow as he eyed the contents of the bucket.

“Yeah, Dustin,”

“That kid from last night?”

“Yeah, he’s doing a project on enzymes and wants to investigate the rate of hydrogen peroxide breakdown by liver” She cringed internally because she didn’t think there was actually any liver in the bucket. Billy seemed to buy it though as he walked over and opened the cupboard above her and pulled out a glass.

“You need a lift?” He questioned as he filled the glass with water. He turned to face her and lent back against the side. He downed the water before setting the glass on the side. His hair was sticking up at different angles, combined with the sleepy look in his eyes, it made him look very soft. Y/N couldn’t help the smile that found its way onto her face as he hooked his finger in her belt loop and pulled him towards her. She rested her forehead on his bare chest for a moment as his arms wrapped around her.

“No, I should be fine walking but I’ve got to get going.” She pulled away to look at him before pressing a kiss to his cheek and unwinding herself from his grip. He followed her into the hall and watched as she pulled on a thin jacket, that she would later regret, and grabbed the spare set of keys and handed them too him. “Can you just lock up when you leave and post them through the letter box?”

He nodded and she turned to walk to the door where her bag and bucket were waiting. But Billy caught her arm. “You know I wouldn’t really count you as someone to sleep with someone and run.” There was a smile on his face but she could see the insecurity behind his eyes, the fear that the first person he had allowed himself to be

vulnerable around in so long was just going to walk away.

She raised an eyebrow and stepped towards him. "I can't avoid this, it's important." She rested her forehead against his before leaning forward and connecting their lips. He tried to deepen the kiss but she pulled back and lightly pushed on his chest. He kept his eyes closed for a moment.

"Yeah, sorry. How 'bout I pick you up at 8. We could actually go somewhere. On like an actual date that doesn't involve just sitting in my car." He asked with a small smile.

"Yeah, okay." She smiled before turning to leave. The reality of what she, Steve and Dustin were about to do set in and the anxiety closed around her throat. Her hand shook and she reached for the door handle and pulled the door open.

"You sure you're okay, princess?" Billy asked from behind her, his eyes locked on her trembling hand.

"Yeah it's just... I'm not sure when it happened, but I fell in love with you, Billy Hargrove, and it was the best thing I've ever done." She smiled before pretty much running out of the house before he could reply.

Billy was frozen to the spot in the middle of her kitchen. He was unable to comprehend that she could love him back. He was unable to comprehend the fact that someone who had seen all his broken parts could actually love him. He didn't deserve her. He knew that much. She was sweet and kind and smart and funny. She had ambitions. While he was a mess who had no idea where life would take him. However, this time he was willing to try and work through his mess, was willing to try and get his life back on track. So he could actually say that he deserved the only person to make him truly happy since his mom had left.

## 5. Violent Delights Have Violent Ends

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 2 episode 8 and 9, abuse, Billy's asshole father, swearing

Billy was, for once, actually happy. He might have been stuck babysitting Max all day and his dad and step-mom might be three hours late back, but he was actually happy. He had the whole night planned and he was determined not to mess it up. He had booked a restaurant and managed to swipe a few beers from Tommy so they could drive somewhere and watch the stars on the hood of his car. The Four Horsemen by Metallica blasted through the room from his stereo as he got ready, his eyes flittering to the clock every now and again to make sure he's got enough time. A cigarette hung from his lips as he smiled to himself in the mirror and adjusted his hair slightly. The smile vanished when a soft knock sounded on his door.

"Billy?" Susan, his step-mom, called through the door.

"Yeah, I'm a little busy in here Susan." His voice decreased in volume as he reached the end of the sentence.

"Open the door! Right now!" At the sound of his dad's voice Billy tensed and stumped out his cigarette before walking to the door and throwing it open.

"What's wrong?" Billy asked leaning back slightly in the doorway.

"Why don't you tell us?" Neil said cryptically.

"Because I don't know." Billy shot back seriously.

"We can't find Maxine." Susan's voice was soft but the panic was evident in her tone.

"And her windows open." Neil added as Billy looked away from him. "Where is she?"

Billy shifted on his feet unsteadily, silently cursing Max for picking

today of all days to run off. "I don't know."

"You don't know?" Neil chuckled, but there was no humour in his tone.

"Look, I'm sure she just, I don't know, went to the arcade or something." Billy turned away from his dad and walked over to his closet. "I'm sure she's fine."

"You were supposed to watch her." Neil followed his son into the room.

Billy kept his back to his dad as he pulled his brown leather jacket on over his partially buttoned red shirt. "Yeah, Dad, I was. But since you guys were three hours late and, well, I have a date." He finally turned around as he adjusted his sleeves and collar. He was walking on thin ice and he knew it. "I'm sorry, alright."

"So, that's why you've been staring at yourself in the mirror like some faggot and not watching your sister." Neil crossed his arms as his gaze burned into Billy.

"I have been looking after her all week, dad! And if she wants to run off then that's her problem, all right?" Billy knew he was digging himself deeper but right now all he wanted to do was get out of the house and escape with Y/N for the night so he could pretend that his life was normal. "She's 13 years old, she shouldn't need a full-time baby sitter." He turned the stereo off. "And she's not my sister!"

That was the last straw. Neil's hands wound into the material of Billy's jacket and he used all his strength to slam Billy back into his shelves. Billy clenched his jaw as the shelves dug into his back, knowing the bruises would be bad and he hated Y/N seeing him like that. He made sure his gaze didn't leave his dad's because that was a big no when things got like this. It would make the situation worse than it already was and Billy needed to deescalate it quickly if he wanted to get out without any more injuries.

"What did we talk about?" Neil asked. When Billy didn't answer immediately, Neil's fist connected with the boy's face. Neil roughly pulled his chin back up to look at him. Billy clenched his fists at his

sides and tried not to break down. "What. Did. We. Talk. About?"

Billy's voice shook as he tried so hard to keep his emotions down. "Respect and responsibility."

"Right, now, apologise to Susan."

Billy hesitated. "I'm sorry, Susan."

"It's okay, Neil, really..." Susan tried but he cut her off.

"No! It's not okay! Nothing about his behaviour is okay!" Neil pointed his finger at Billy's face to emphasis every word. "But he's going to make up for it. He's going to call whatever, whore, he's seeing tonight and cancel their date."

Billy's jaw locked. "She's not..." He couldn't even finish before his dad pulled him forward before pushing him up against the shelves again; only harder this time.

"And then, he's going to go find his sister, like the good, kind, respecting brother that he is. Isn't that right, Billy?" Neil stepped back from him slightly and Billy's chest moved rapidly as he tried to control his breathing. "Isn't that right!"

"Yes, sir." Billy's voice was smaller than usual.

Neil sighed. "I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you."

"Yes. Sir." Billy accentuated his words as he tried to stop the tears from falling.

"Find Max." Neil said before finally leaving with Susan.

Billy let the tears fall down his cheeks as he pulled one of his rings off and threw it angrily. His hands wound themselves into his hair as he tugged roughly on the strands. The one night he really didn't want ruined had been wrecked in less than five minutes.

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Y/N had officially had the worst day of her life. Her, Steve and

Dustin had made a trail of meat through the woods leading to the car graveyard. They hadn't been there long when Lucas and Max had joined them to help. They armoured an old, rusted school bus ready for Dart, if he showed up. Which he had but, when he did show up, he wasn't alone. There was a pack of the Demodogs, as Dustin kept calling them. Steve and Y/N had nearly been devoured before the dogs set off running back towards Hawkins Lab. They followed them to the lab and found Jonathan and Nancy. That was when things really went to shit.

The lab was over run, Mike, Joyce, Will and Hopper managed to get out somehow but no one had seen Y/N's parents. Steve had held her back from running inside and had managed to get her into Jonathan's car and then they went back to the Byers' house.

They managed to get information off of Will, who was apparently possessed by something the kids were calling the mind flayer, and then they had been attacked once again by the Demodogs. Eleven had shown up in time to save them and then Joyce, Jonathan and Nancy had taken Will to try and banish whatever was in him and Hopper and Eleven had gone to shut the gate. That left Y/N and Steve babysitting.

The kids had been trying to convince Y/N and Steve to go down into the tunnels to draw away the Demodogs from the gate. Steve and Y/N were adamant that nothing of the sort was going to happen after they had all nearly died several times today as it was. The kids were still going on about it when the roar of a car engine split through the air.

They all made a beeline for the window in time to see the all too familiar blue Camaro pull up in front of the house.

"It's my brother! He can't know I'm here. He'll kill me. He'll kill us." Max's eyes were wide as she looked over to Steve and Y/N.

Y/N glanced at Steve who met her gaze. "Stay here. Stay out of sight." He said.

She went to protest but he was already outside. She cursed him under her breath and started looking for the syringe with the sedative in it

that they had been using to sedate Will. Worse case scenario, if she couldn't get Billy to calm down, she would have to sedate him. He would probably hate her for it but he couldn't know about all this stuff right now. Hopefully he would never need to.

She was looking in the kitchen when Dustin said, "Shit, did he see us?"

"Why the hell were you at the window?" She looked at them with wide eyes as she walked back into the room. "Get behind me." The kids did as they were told.

Billy flung the door open and his eyes immediately landed on Y/N. He froze momentarily as his heart seemed to freeze in his chest. His eyes darted back to where Steve was lying on the floor and then back to her. His jaw locked as his eyes moved over Y/N's shoulder towards the kids.

Y/N took a step forward. "Billy..."

He cut her off, "Well, well, well. Lucas Sinclair, what a surprise. I thought I told you to stay away from him, Max."

"Billy, go away." Max said.

"Billy, you need to leave." Y/N pressed a hand on his chest and positioned herself in between him and Lucas. He was still glaring daggers over her shoulder at the kids.

"I can't; not without Max. I tried calling." Billy tried to get around her but she moved with him. His hands clenched at his sides as his frustration grew. He wasn't thinking straight and he knew it but he was too far gone to stop now. "Get out of my way, Y/N." He was starting to shake as his eyes met hers. The normal comforting blue had gone cold and even though she knew he would never hurt her; she still had the urge to move away from him. But she didn't, she held her ground because she was scared of what he would do if she didn't.

"I don't know what he did, or said, this time, but this isn't the answer, Billy." She brought her other hand up and rested it on his

bare chest, over his heart, that was showing through his shirt. "Don't let him make you like him."

Billy froze as her hand rested over his heart. His mind jumped from thought to thought at such a speed that he couldn't keep up with it. All the doubt and insecurity came creeping in and the anger started to fade into the background. He went to reply to her but Steve came back in and landed a punch on the side of his face that sent him sprawling backwards into the kitchen.

"Steve!" Y/N yelled as Billy stood up laughing. She immediately positioned herself in front of Steve as the anger resurfaced in Billy's eyes. She moved forward and pushed him back as he tried to move towards Steve. One of her hands bunched up in his shirt as the other put pressure on his shoulder.

"Looks like you got some fire in you after all, Harrington!" Billy screamed over Y/N's shoulder as she tried to hold him back. "I've been waiting to meet this, King Steve, everyone's been telling me so much about!"

"Billy, stop." Y/N tried but he was too far gone. His eyes remained trained on Steve. They all knew that she couldn't actually hold Billy back. He was taller than her and weighed twice as much, with the muscle added into the equation she stood no chance. But she knew Steve didn't either.

"Get out!" Steve spat over Y/N's shoulder.

Billy shook his head with a malicious smile in his face as his arm wrapped around Y/N's waist and shifted her to one side with ease as he swung a punch at Steve. Steve ducked and landed a punch on Billy's cheek. Billy hit the table and stood up laughing but Steve hit him again sending him towards the sink. One more punch sent Billy backwards and he collided with the sink. He was still laughing as his hand reached out to the side and came into contact with a plate.

"Billy! No!" Y/N screamed but Billy swung the plate and it connected with Steve's face, sending him stumbling backwards. Billy's fist connected with Steve's face as Dustin ducked out of the way. Billy went to follow Steve back into the front room but Y/N stepped in the

way. "Stop, please."

"No one tells me what to do!" He said and pushed her out of the way. He grabbed Steve and headbutted him sending him across the floor. Billy got on top of Steve and just started punching. Y/N could see Steve's blood flying as she gripped Billy's shoulders and pulled with all her strength. She sent them both sprawling across the floor. He went to get back up but she grabbed his shoulders and positioned herself between him and Steve. She was too aware that Steve wasn't moving behind her.

"Stop, don't become your dad. Billy, please." She pleaded as she gripped onto his shirt like it was an anchor. "I meant what I said; I love you."

Billy looked at her and then back at Steve. "You can't just say that and then disappear with someone else!" Billy sounded broken but the anger was still there in his voice.

Max had managed to find the needle and sedative that Y/N couldn't. She took off the cover and then slammed the needle into Billy's neck. Y/N jumped back in shock as Billy looked around in confusion before stumbling to his feet. Y/N took her chance to look at Steve who was covered in blood. He was still breathing and his pulse was strong. Y/N let out a relieved sigh as Billy's hand went to his neck and pulled the needle out.

"What the hell is this?" Billy stumbled slightly as his vision started to blur. He was beginning to panic. It felt like he had just done around fifty keg stands at once. "You little shit, what did you do?" He took one more step forward before his legs gave out and he fell backwards. He hit the floor with a loud bang as all the others looked on in shock.

Max suddenly went and grabbed Steve's bat. "From here on out you leave me, and my friends, alone." She said with the bat over her shoulder. "Understand?"

"Screw you." Billy muttered unsteadily as he started to lose consciousness.

Max slammed the bat down in-between his legs. Billy looked up in shock and horror. "Say you understand. Say it!" Max screamed lifting the bat again.

"I understand." Billy mumbled his eyes half shut.

Max dropped the bat and Y/N shuffled over to Billy. She checked that he was okay as the kids started talking about the tunnels again. She took a few shaky breaths as she felt his pulse. It helped ground her and he breathing evened back out. She turned to the kids.

"You three get Steve in the Camaro." Y/N said looking towards the boys as she stood up. She was shaking from the adrenaline but she knew it wouldn't take long to wear off.

"What?" The boys said.

"Get Steve in Billy's Camaro. If we do this, we do it my way." Y/N said. The boys all smiled and shot into action.

"Max, help me get him onto the sofa." Y/N pointed towards Billy.

"But..." Max tried.

"You just knocked him out and then threatened him with a bat. Help me get him onto the sofa." Y/N said sternly and Max begrudgingly helped. They made sure to lay him on his side before Y/N slipped her hands into Billy's front pocket and pulled out his keys. Her and Max went outside to find that the boys had successfully managed to get Steve, and themselves, into the back of the car. Y/N picked Billy's leather jacket off the floor and threw it on as Max got in the passenger side. She climbed into the driver's seat and set off towards the pumpkin patch.

## 6. Brief Explanations

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Mentions of abuse, blood

The plan to draw all the Demodogs into the tunnels, away from the gate, had been a success. Even if they had to fight off vines that seemed determined to encapsulate them into the tunnel walls. After an initial freak out session, Steve had been reluctantly okay with the plan. Now they just had to hope that the other two groups had similar luck to their own, that Will was okay and El had managed to close the gate. They could worry about the others later though, right now, they were all tired, bruised and just wanted to get home.

Y/N was still driving Billy's Camaro, and wearing his jacket much to Steve's disgust, as she dropped the kids back at home one by one. Eventually, it was only her, Steve and Max in the car.

"So, you and Billy? I mean, out of everyone in this town, you had to pick him." Steve questioned as he cradled his throbbing head in one hand.

"I'll explain tomorrow, I'm too tired right now." Y/N promised him.

He nodded and seemed to accept that it was the only answer he was currently going to get. The rest of the ride to his house was silent, except for the radio.

"I'll come check on you tomorrow." Y/N looked across at Steve as they pulled up to his house. He looked terrible. Billy really hadn't pulled any of his punches and the bruises and cuts on Steve's face were going to take a long time to heal fully.

"Okay, night." Steve said as he stumbled towards his front door. Y/N watched to make sure he got in okay as Max climbed into the front seat.

"Right, let's get you home." Y/N muttered as she threw the car into reverse and backed out of Steve's drive.

“What about Billy?” The redhead looked across at the older girl.

Y/N sighed. “You just get your step-dad to look out of the window and say that Billy dropped you off but needs some air. I’ll deal with Billy. You better tell your mom that me and Steve run a study group.”

“A study group?” Max tried not to laugh.

“I know, but it’s the best excuse we have. And it’s kinda educational all this monster fighting.” Y/N laughed and Max joined in. Max was a cool kid and the pair got on well. It didn’t stop Max wondering how on earth Y/N and Billy had ended up together. Y/N was everything Billy wasn’t; she was calm, collected and nice. Billy was the complete opposite in Max’s eyes. Sure, he had been a lot calmer when they lived in California, but she couldn’t see that Billy coming back when they were in Indiana.

It wasn’t long until they pulled up in front of the Hargrove-Mayfield household. Neil was already looking out of the window as soon as the tell-tale sound of the Camaro’s engine cut through the peace and quiet. The dark and the positioning of the car meant that he couldn’t actually see who was sitting behind the wheel though.

“Looks like he already saw.” Max climbed out of the car. “Night, Y/N.”

“Goodnight, Max.” Y/N smiled as the girl shut the door. Y/N watched her get inside before pulling off and heading back to the Byers house.

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Billy was still out cold on the sofa when Y/N opened the door. She pocketed the Camaro keys and pulled the jacket tighter around her shoulders. The room was freezing cold. She had no idea how to work the heating so she just grabbed a blanket from Jonathan’s room and draped it over Billy. She gently brushed his hair out of his face as she glanced around the room at the wreckage they had all created and cringed. After everything she had been through this year, Joyce really didn’t need to come home to this mess.

Y/N set about tidying the living room and the kitchen slowly. She

picked up everything the boys had smashed before sweeping the floor for the shards. She left the Will's drawing of the tunnels up because she had no idea what to do with them. She was writing Joyce a note explaining about the fight and warning her about the Demodog in the fridge, when she heard a groan followed by cursing from the living room.

She walked through in time to see Billy try, and fail, to stand up. She lent against the wall and crossed her arms. "I wouldn't do that yet. Max gave you a pretty strong sedative." Y/N warned and his eyes shot up to look at her.

"Where is she?" His voice wavered and he sounded scared.

"I took her and the others home. I took your car. Your dad thinks it was you who dropped her off." Y/N assured him as she walked over to him and took his face in her hands. She lifted his head to look at her as she examined the bruises forming. Steve had got a couple of good hits and Billy's lip was split, there were bruises on his cheekbone and over his right eye and there was dried blood around his nose.

"I'm fine, princess." Billy said as he tried to stand up again. He swayed slightly but managed to stand up straight.

"You might be but Steve's not." Y/N said as she walked into the kitchen to finish off the note for Joyce.

"I'm sorry, Y/N. My dad realised Max was missing and he..." Billy trailed off and ran a hand over his face. He knew that wasn't an excuse for what he did. The only healthy output he had ever had for his emotions had been surfing. Considering Indiana was landlocked, that was no longer an option and it had started manifesting itself more as anger and he had started lashing out at everyone he could.

"That's not an excuse for nearly attacking a thirteen-year-old and nearly killing Steve. I'm not the one you need to apologise too." Y/N sighed. "You need to work on all this, Billy."

"I know. But I haven't been getting into as many fights. You help me, Y/N. You really do." Billy tripped over part of Will's drawing as he

followed her into the kitchen. “What the hell is this?”

“Will likes drawing. This one was a scavenger hunt.” Y/N shrugged as she binned the last of the shattered pottery.

“Don’t lie to me. Why were you all here tonight?” He walked further into the room.

“It’s a study group, Billy.” Y/N lied through her teeth but he didn’t need to be dragged into the mess they had all found themselves tangled in. “Me and Steve have been running it for the past few years. Max decided she wanted to join.”

Billy nodded. “And everything else you said?”

“I wasn’t lying when I said that I loved you.” Y/N kept her back turned to him.

Billy walked over and spun her to face him. “Then I never gave you an answer.” Billy took a deep breath and trained his eyes onto the floor. “I love you too, Y/N L/N.” He had a small smile on his face as he spoke. She matched his smile and gently tilted his chin up until his eyes met hers. She cupped his cheek with her hand before pulling him forward and connecting their lips. She tasted metal on her tongue from his split lip but that didn’t stop either of them. When they did pull back, it was for air. Billy smiled at her and kissed her forehead.

“Let’s go home, I’m tired.” Y/N said as she grabbed his hand and pulled him in the direction of the front door.

“By the way, you look good in my jacket.” Billy smirked as her cheeks were tinted red.

## 7. Phone Call

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Mentions of abuse and death

After a brief argument about who was driving (which Y/N won for obvious reasons that included a fight and a sedative), the pair got in the Camaro and Y/N drove back to her house. They were both pretty much dead on their feet. A quick glance at the clock in the car told them why. Billy was trying not to show it, but his head was throbbing and his back was aching painfully with every slight movement of the car. The fall to the floor when Max had sedated him had not helped at all. He hated to think about what the bruises were going look like.

Y/N pulled the Camaro into the empty drive way and willed herself not to think about her parents. She knew she would break down if she did and neither of them needed that right now. They both climbed out of the car and Y/N watched as Billy winced as he moved his shoulders. They didn't talk as they walked inside and Y/N sat him at the kitchen table. She grabbed the first aid kit and placed it on the kitchen side before shrugging his jacket off her shoulders. She cleaned his split knuckles before moving to clean the cuts on his face. He watched her work quietly; waiting for the inevitable question about his back. She gave him an ice pack for his knuckles and another for his jaw. She moved her hands to the buttons on his shirt before looking up at him to gauge his reaction. He nodded weakly and set the icepacks down on the side. She gently unbuttoned the shirt before he turned away from her so she could pull it off his shoulders.

He heard her sharp intake of breath as she dragged her eyes across his back. He scrunched his eyes shut and balled his hands into fists by his sides. He willed his breathing to slow down as he cursed his dad for everything that had happened tonight. All he had wanted was a night to forget about everything and be himself in a way he hadn't been since they had left California for this dead end town.

Y/N gingerly ran her fingers over the marks. The bruises were yet to

fully appear but the faint colouring of them could be seen beneath his skin. "What did he do?" Her voice was soft but there was a slight anger underlaying it.

"He got pissed that Max had ran off for the day and we argued and then he shoved me into my shelves a couple of times." His voice was strained and she could tell he was trying not to breakdown. She pressed a kiss to his bare shoulder before rubbing tea tree oil onto the area. She knew how much they would hurt when they came out fully and she was going to do anything to reduce the swelling. She pulled out a pack of frozen peas, thanked god they were unopened, and gently pressed them onto his back. He jumped slightly at the coldness but instantly relaxed when it started to numb the area.

Billy reached around and pulled her so she was standing at his side. He entwined her hand with his non-bruised one and she kept the other on the bag of peas on his bag. She rested her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes. They stayed like that until the peas had thawed. Y/N threw them and the ice packs back in the freezer before leading him upstairs. She gave him some painkillers and was about to speak when the phone rang loudly throughout the house.

Y/N ran into her parent's room where the closest phone was sat on their bedside table. "Hello?" Her voice shook in anticipation.

"Y/N, it's Hopper." Hopper sounded tired. "She did it. El closed the gate."

"Thank god." Y/N scrunched her eyes shut in both relief and anticipation of the news that could follow.

"There are search teams heading in now, looking for survivors. They're gonna call me as soon as they find your parents. And then I'll call you. Okay, kiddo?" Hopper relayed.

Y/N couldn't help the tears that started streaming down her face. "Yeah. Thank you Hop."

"Get some sleep." Hopper hung up and Y/N felt Billy's presence behind her.

“Everything okay?” His voice was quiet, as if he was scared of spooking her. She turned into him and buried her face in his bare chest. He wrapped his arms around her, careful to not aggravate his shoulders. He pressed a kiss to the top her head. “What happened, princess?”

“There was an accident at the lab. My parents... My parents were there and no one knows if they’re alright.” She scrunched her eyes shut and curled her hands into fists against his chest. “That was Hopper, he says he’ll call when he knows.” A sob escaped her throat as he ran a hand through her hair.

Billy nodded and rested his hands gently on her biceps. He pushed her away from him so he could meet her eyes. “Let’s get some sleep. It’ll be light soon.”

She just nodded before letting him lead her to her bedroom. She kicked off her shoes before collapsing under the covers. Billy kicked his shoes off as well before he quickly joined her; neither of them had the energy to shed the rest of their clothes. He pulled her back flush against his chest as he found a comfy position for his shoulders. She laced her fingers through his as she settled back into him. It didn’t take long for either of them to fall asleep and for once neither of them would be woken until the phone rang at midday.

## 8. The Truth Reveals Itself

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Panic attack, death, hospitals

The phone ringing nearly gave Y/N and Billy a heart attack. They both shot upright as the tones started echoing through the house. It took a couple of seconds for them to comprehend what was happening in their sleep addled state. The events of the following night hit Y/N all at once like a freight train. She jumped out of bed and practically sprinted to the phone in her parents' room. She ripped the handset off the stand as she fell to her knees on the floor next to the bedside table. "Hello?"

"Y/N," Hopper sighed. "You need to come to the hospital."

"I-is everything alright?"

"Look, just get here and I'll explain everything. Okay?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I'll see you soon." She set the phone back on the stand. She felt like she should be crying or panicking but she just felt empty. Like the dread had just settled at the bottom of her stomach and was preventing her from feeling anything else.

She kept her eyes trained on the wall in front of her as Billy stumbled into the doorway. He was trying to rub the sleep out of his eyes and his hair was all over the place. The bruises on his face had turned dark blue and had swelled up. His jeans were hanging low on his hips, which was to be expected after he had slept in them. He was still shirtless, but that was also to be expected. Overall, he just looked very disorientated. Y/N didn't look much better.

"I need," She paused. Did she want to borrow his car, have him drive her there, drive there with him? "I need you to drive me to the hospital." In case of the worst-case scenario, she knew she wouldn't want to be alone.

"Everything okay?" He crouched down in front of her, wincing

slightly as his shoulders shifted.

She finally met his gaze. "I don't know. Hopper said to meet him at the hospital."

He nodded and reached out his hand. She took it and he pulled her up with him. "Let's go then."

---

The drive to the hospital was silent, the radio barely audible because Billy had turned it down so low the previous night when his head had been throbbing. Neither of them reached out to turn it up. Y/N kept her eyes trained out of the window as she mindlessly played with Billy's fingers that were resting on her knee. The panic was starting to creep up her throat the closer they got to the hospital. Every scenario about what she might find when they got there was racing through her mind over and over again.

Billy kept shifting his gaze from the road to look at her. His left hand was gripping the steering wheel so tightly his knuckles had gone white. He could feel his heart thumping in his chest as the Camaro got ever closer to the hospital. Y/N didn't deserve this. In his eyes she didn't deserve anything bad to ever happen to her.

They pulled into the hospital and Billy parked in the first space he saw. He climbed out of the car and walked around to the passenger side. Y/N rested her head in her hands as she tried to slow her breathing down. Billy opened the car door and held his hand out to her. She took another deep breath before letting him pull her out of the car. He shut the door behind her before wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her into his side. They walked to the hospital entrance in silence. Y/N could feel her heart beating in her throat as they walked through the sliding doors.

Billy's grip on her tightened as he caught sight of the police chief sat in the waiting area with his elbows resting on his knees. Hopper got to his feet as he caught sight of the two teenagers. He looked Billy up and down warily as he walked over, taking in the leather jacket and the fresh bruises on the boy's face.

Hopper stopped just in front of them with his hat in his hands. “Your mom is in room 303. She was injured in the accident but she’s awake and stable. Your dad,” Hopper sighed and looked away before returning his gaze to her. “it was too late when we found him. He didn’t make it, Y/N.”

Y/N didn’t even feel her legs give out. One minute she was standing next to Billy, the next she was practically sat on his knee on the floor. Hopper was saying something; she could see his lips moving but the ringing in her ears was blocking everything else out. She could feel the tears running down her cheeks and Billy’s arms around her. She lent further into him as he looked up at Hopper with terrified eyes. A nurse appeared in her line of vision and seemed to be saying something to her but she couldn’t make it out.

Billy had started to panic as soon as he felt Y/N go slack in his grip. He had practically fallen to the floor himself to stop her hitting the floor. His shoulders had painfully jolted but he pushed the pain to the back of his mind. Hopper knelt down in front of them to ask if she was alright but she just stared forwards; her eyes glazed over. Tears were streaming down her cheeks as Billy looked to Hopper. Fear was crawling up his throat and he didn’t know what to do. Hopper met Billy’s terrified gaze and called over a nurse. The nurse knelt in front of them, next to Hopper. She was talking but Y/N gave no indication that she could hear her. Billy almost sobbed in relief when she lent further back into him and dug her fingers into his arm. He carefully moved his hand to cup her cheek as she turned to look at him.

“Y/N, can you hear me?” His voice cracked halfway through as he repeated the nurse’s words.

As she met Billy’s blue eyes, all her senses seemed to come back at once. The ringing in her ears gave way to what seemed like deafening silence. She nodded in response to his question and felt him sigh heavily against her in relief. Billy’s heartrate dropped drastically as she nodded to him.

“Can I- can I see my mom?” Y/N turned to look at Hopper who also sighed in relief.

“Yeah, of course.”

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The weeks leading up to Christmas passed in a blur. The funeral was held two weeks after the ‘accident’ at the lab. Y/N and her mom spent the weeks following trying to put their lives back together. Her mom had got a new job lined up for when she had fully recovered at the new mall on the edge of town that was due to open in the summer. She would be running the electrical department which was a bit of a downgrade from her previous job but it payed well so she didn’t complain.

Billy had been her rock following the ‘accident’. He never pushed her to do things like most other people had tried and was just there for her when she needed him. But he also respected the days that she needed to be alone. School had been hard. Everyone gave her sympathetic glances in the hall and talked to her as though they were walking on eggshells. She hated it. Billy, Nancy, Steve and Jonathan seemed to be the only people who still treated her like a person. She was glad to have a break from it all.

Christmas was the hardest day for Y/N and her mom. It felt wrong just the two of them. They ate dinner together before her mom went to bed early with a carton of eggnog. Y/N followed her up not much later and opened her window a crack before lying in bed. Billy pushed it open and climbed through not long after, shutting it after himself. He didn’t say anything as he ditched most of his clothes and climbed in next to her. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled him against his chest. She rested her head against his chest, just under his chin as her hand moved up to mess with his necklace.

“Merry Christmas, Billy.” She whispered against him.

He pressed a kiss to her head. “Merry Christmas, Y/N.”

They both thought this year had the worst year both of them had ever had but at least they could look forward to the year to come.

How wrong they were.

## 9. College Applications

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: None!

Billy had never been so nervous in his entire life. He felt as though the two letters were either going to spontaneously combust or burn a hole through his dash board. As soon as he walked through the front door after school his dad had shoved the two letters into his hands.

“Don’t even know why you bothered applying. It’s not like they would want you.” Neil’s words cut through his chest as they always did but he didn’t give his dad the satisfaction of getting a rise out of him. He just pushed passed and walked straight over to the phone in the hallway. He could hear his dad laughing to himself as he walked out of the front door but he ignored it and punched in the familiar set of numbers.

“Hello?” Y/N answered on the fourth ring.

“Hey, it’s me.”

“You got yours too?”

He could hear her smile through the phone but it didn’t ease the felling of dread forming in his stomach. “Yeah, Berkeley and San Diego.”

“Same. Do you want to open them together?”

“Um,” He hesitated. What if he hadn’t got in and she had? What if they had both got in different ones? “Yeah, I’ll pick you up in fifteen.”

“Okay, see you soon.” She hung up the phone as he took a deep breath.

Billy’s breathing was uneven as he watched her walk out of the house, her letters in one hand and a bag in the other. She smiled at him as she got in the car but her hands shaking were a dead

giveaway that she was just as nervous as him. Similar bad scenarios were running through her mind. It had taken so much convincing to even get him to apply because his dad had cemented the idea that he wasn't good enough into his head. He insisted he would just find a mechanics job while she studied, but she wasn't having it. She knew he was smarter than he let on and knew he could get in if he just put the work in and stopped doubting himself.

As soon as she was settled in the passenger seat, he reached across and tossed his letters onto her lap before pulling out of her drive.

"You open them while I drive." Billy dropped a hand to her knee to stop her leg bouncing.

"No way!" She looked at him as if he had lost his mind. "Drive to the quarry and we'll open them there. I managed to swipe a few beers off my mom so we can drink them as we open them."

He huffed. "Fine."

As soon as Billy put the car in park, Y/N opened two of the cans and handed him one. He downed the entire can in one as she rolled her eyes before taking a sip of her own. "At this rate I'll be driving us home."

He rolled his eyes in return and held out his hand. "Let's get this over with."

"Which one first?" She placed his letters in his hand as she deposited her beer in the cup holder.

"San Diego?" He sounded as if he was questioning himself.

"Sounds good. You go first."

Now it was Billy's turn to look at her as if she had lost her mind. "What? No, this was your idea, you have to go first."

"Or we do it at the same time?" She countered.

"Alright." He took a deep breath.

The letters from Berkeley were thrown onto the dashboard before they both opened the envelopes with the University of San Diego logo on the front. Their hands were shaking as they pulled the letter out of the envelope. Y/N's eyes ran over the first line and she squealed. "I got in!" She looked over at Billy who seemed to be frozen in the spot, his eyes moving rapidly across the paper. "Billy?"

"So did I." His voice was quiet as he looked up at her with disbelief. "I got in."

Her grin doubled in size as she threw her arms around his shoulders. His hands immediately dropped to her waist as he lifted her over the centre console and onto his lap. He smiled up at her as she tangled her fingers in his hair. He couldn't remember ever feeling like this before. He had finally done it; he'd proved his dad wrong. All because of the beautiful girl perched on his thighs. He moved a hand up to her face and moved her hair out of the way before pulled her down and kissing her with everything he had. He pulled back but kept his hand on her face as she bit her lip to hide her growing smile. Her fingers messed with the hair at the base of his neck as she turned to look at the other letters.

"We should probably open those as well." She laughed softly as she met his crystal blue gaze.

"Probably." A smile tugged at the corner of his lips. He didn't care if Berkeley rejected him now, at least he could get out of this town with the girl he loved.

Y/N twisted in his lap and reached over to grab the letters. She turned back to face him and passed him his. They both opened them again; shaking less now they knew they were definitely going somewhere. This time it was Billy who spoke first. "They accepted me."

"Me too." Y/N smiled as she met his eyes, a similar smile gracing his features.

"We're getting out of here!" He laughed properly for what felt like the first time in years. It was as if all the weight he had been carrying since his mom left had been taken off his shoulders.

Y/N joined him laughing before he pulled her closer to him and into a bruising kiss.

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Y/N's mom laughed and hugged them both when they told her. She had tears in her eyes as she held onto them both and insisted she treat them to dinner. Y/N had been reluctant to apply so far away at first because she felt as though she was leaving her mom on her own. But her mom had told her that if she put her future on hold just for her, she would never forgive her, and Y/N would never forgive herself.

Her mom had been wary of Billy at first as well. A few of the other mom's had spoken about the boy from California with the mullet, fast car and bad attitude. But when she met him, she couldn't help but love him. He was sweet, caring and definitely charming. He worshipped the very ground Y/N walked on and she could tell he loved her daughter with all his heart. She could also see that Y/N loved him just as much.

"Billy, do you think we should invite your family? I'm sure they'll want to celebrate this as well." Y/N's mom asked.

Billy froze momentarily. Y/N's mom had no idea about what went on in his house and that inviting his dad was probably a bad idea. But he wanted to see the look on his dad's face when he realised that he was wrong about so much and that Billy could do whatever he put his mind too. He also knew his dad wouldn't do anything with another adult outside the family there so he thought what the hell.

"Yeah, why not." He smiled as Y/N raised an eyebrow at him. He lent down her mom wouldn't hear. "He won't try anything in front of other people, trust me."

Y/N nodded. "If you're sure."

"Yeah." He smiled as Y/N's mom ushered them out of the door.

They piled into Y/N's mom's car, Y/N shotgun and Billy in the backseat as he directed them to his house. His dad's car was outside

as they pulled up and Max was skating in front of the house. She ran up to them as they got out of the car. She looked at them both expectantly as Billy rolled his eyes.

Y/N elbowed him lightly in the ribs before turning to Max. "We got in!"

"I knew you would!" Max gave Y/N a high five as they started walking to the front door. "Which ones?"

"San Diego and Berkeley. But we don't know which one to pick yet." Y/N said as her mom knocked on the door. She slipped her hand into Billy's as he looked at her.

Neil answered the door with a confused and pissed look on his face. Susan appeared behind him as his eyes landed on Billy and went cold. But before he could say anything Y/N's mom was talking.

"You must be Neil and Susan, I'm Louise L/N, Y/N's mom. We were wondering if you wanted to get dinner with us, to celebrate the kids getting into San Diego and Berkeley."

Billy will never forget the look on his dad's face as those words left Y/N's mom's lips. Neil's jaw dropped and he turned into a stuttering mess. Billy had to fight the prideful smile that was threatening to spread across his face. Maybe this year wasn't going to be so bad after all.

## 10. Swimming

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Language

Y/N groaned and buried her head in the nook of Billy's shoulder as the alarm clock started blaring through the room. The late morning sun filtered through the curtains bathing the room in a warm glow. The room was already starting to get really warm which probably meant it was going to be another stifling hot day. The bed covers were pretty much around their ankles. They had most likely kicked them down there when it got too hot in the night. That seemed to be the normal thing at the moment. This summer was one of the hottest in recent years. Billy shifted beneath her as he reached over and slammed the alarm off. Her grip tightened around him as he tried to leave the bed. He chuckled as she buried herself further into him.

"Y/N? Sweetheart, I need to get ready for work." Billy ran his fingers across the skin that was exposed beneath the shirt she was wearing, causing a shiver to run down her spine as she pressed herself even closer to him.

"Why?" She whined, drawing out the y, her breath fanning across the bare skin of his neck.

"So, I don't get fired and we can actually afford to go to college." He pressed a kiss to her temple before shifting her off his chest.

They were already almost a month into their summer break and he had managed to get a job as a lifeguard at the community pool. Y/N had managed to get a part time job working in the Gap at the new mall that had opened at the start of the summer. It meant she could get a lift with her mom or Steve, who had managed to get a job scooping ice-cream. They were putting all their savings together so they could afford a cheap apartment close to the university. They had decided on San Diego because they didn't want the pressure that came with Berkeley and, as Billy put it, San Diego was much nicer and he knew the area.

Y/N pushed herself into a sitting position against the headboard and brushed her fingers through her tangled hair. She stifled yawned into the back of her hand before biting her lip as she watched Billy change into his red shorts.

“See something you like, princess?” Billy’s usual smirk was plastered across his face as he looked her over. She was wearing one of his grey AC/DC shirts and the sight made his heart melt.

“Don’t start something you can’t finish, Hargrove.” She warned, eyes raking down his toned chest. She had to admit the site of him in those red swim shorts almost made it worth getting up. Almost.

He smiled and rested one knee on the bed as he leaned towards her. He pressed a sweet kiss to her lips before pulling back. “You coming by later?”

“Yeah, I’ll be there just after your shift starts.” She pushed his hair out of his face before pulling him back to her. She tried to deepen the kiss but he pulled back and playfully glared at her.

“See you later.” He pressed one more, quick kiss to her lips before he got up and walked out.

Y/N watched him leave before she got up and started getting her own bag ready.

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Y/N felt Billy’s eyes glued to her as soon as she walked out of the locker room. She smiled at him and he smirked back. He nodded to one of the sun loungers closest to the life guard chair that had all of his stuff on it. She knew he had saved it for her and it caused her smile to grow. She placed her stuff next to his before shrugging off the button up she had stolen from his wardrobe as a swim suit cover at the start of the summer. She felt his gaze burning into her and she shook her head before turning to look at him.

“Eyes on the pool.” She scolded him but there was a smile on her face.

He did as she instructed with a smile plastered across his face. She

walked across to the lanes that had been set up so people could swim without the fear of accidentally drowning a child. She carefully lowered herself into the water and sighed in relief. She was right about it being a sweltering hot day and the water instantly cooled her burning skin. She did laps for about forty-five minutes before the cold began to seep into her bones. She climbed out and hoped the heat from the sun would cease her shivers as soon as possible.

“You’re going to get ill if you keep spending that long in the water. I swear they don’t actually know the right temperature to set the water at.” Billy wrapped her towel around her shoulders and she pulled it tight around her.

“Yeah, well it’s better than melting in this heat.”

He laughed. “Yeah, you’re probably right.” He bit his lip and looked at the floor. “Look, I was thinking we should go out for dinner tonight.”

“Where’d you have in mind?” She moved her wet hair out of her face as he brought his eyes up to meet hers.

“That new place, out of town, that you said you wanted to try.”

“Yeah that sounds good.”

“I’ll pick you up at eight.”

She smiled. “Seven, or my mom will kill us for being back too late.”

“Seven then.” He pulled her forward by her towel and pressed a quick kiss to her lips.

“I’m being glared at by a lot of middle-aged women.” Y/N laughed as her eyes drifted across the loungers on the other side of the pool. “I don’t think your fan club is very happy.”

He hummed. “And guess what?”

“What?”

“I don’t care.” A smirk tugged across his lips as he pulled her forward

and kissed her again. He nipped her bottom lip as she pushed him backwards. He had a satisfied smirk on his face as her cheeks gained a light dusting of pink.

“I’ll see you at seven.” She smiled.

“Seven.” He flashed her a toothy smile before walking back to the lifeguard chair.

She watched him go, shamelessly checking out his ass in those tight red shorts. Billy Hargrove was going to be the end of her.

## 11. The Crash

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Car crash, spoilers for season 3

Billy was, for the first time in his life, early. He rang the doorbell at twenty to seven, causing Y/N to shout for her mom to let him in while she finished styling her hair. She didn't do anything too fancy, only curled it. She applied a small amount of make-up and a layer of lip gloss that accentuated her lips. She threw the essentials into a small bag before giving herself one last once off in the mirror.

When she walked downstairs her mom had sat Billy at the kitchen island and was chatting to him about college as she idly moved around the kitchen. He was wearing his leather jacket over a white t-shirt and his usual jeans and boots. His necklace hung over the top of the shirt, not hidden beneath as it usually was. His hair was more styled than usual showing that he had put some effort into his appearance for the night.

"Hey." Y/N walked over to the pair of them and stood next to Billy.

"Hey, you look beautiful." Billy smiled as he dragged his eyes over her form. She'd chosen a pair of tight-fitting jeans and a floral blouse, her denim jacket resting over her arm with her bag. He rested his hand on her hip and pulled her closer to him as she bit her lip and looked at the floor.

"You two better not be back too late." Y/N's mom warned them both with a smile on her face.

"We won't." Y/N said.

"I'll have her home before midnight, Mrs. L/N." Billy smiled and stood up from the chair, his hand slipping into the back pocket of Y/N's jeans.

"How many times? Call me Louise. Now you kids better get going." She shooed them both out of the door with a small laugh.

Billy held the door open as Y/N climbed into the Camaro's passenger seat. He quickly climbed into the driver's seat before throwing the car in reverse and backing out of the drive. His right hand dropped to Y/N's knee as he set off down the road that took them out of town. His fingers drummed against her knee to the beat of the music coming from the radio. Y/N rested one of her hands over his, fingers curling around his, as she lent her chin on the other. The trees whipped past outside. They very quickly passed the leaving Hawkins sign before Billy drew Y/N's attention away from the road.

"You know, if we eat quick, we could go to that motel that's not too far from the restaurant." The way he bit his lip and raised his eyebrow meant she knew what he had in mind.

"Do you ever think about anything else?" Y/N laughed as he turned a corner. She was no longer paying attention to where they were as he carried on driving above the speed limit.

"Hard too when you're dressed in jeans that tight, princess." He smirked, eyes briefly landing on her before looking back at the road.

Neither of them saw what hit the windshield. One minute the car was speeding down the road, the next it was swerving violently as Billy tried to regain control. The car swung passenger side first into a metal structure. The sound of metal crumpling echoed through the night air as the car came to a halt. The glass of the windshield had shattered out from one point where whatever it was had hit the car. The engine was smoking, but not enough to cause immediate panic.

Billy groaned as he sat up, his hand coming up to his head. His fingers were coated red as he pulled them away. His head throbbed but he'd had much worse so he could deal with it. He looked over to the passenger seat and felt his heart stop beating. Y/N was leaning up against the passenger door. Her left arm was at a funny angle and there was blood running down the side of her head. Her eyes were closed.

"Y/N?" His heart started running at ten times its normal rate when she didn't move. "Y/N?" The urgency in his voice became clearer as he reached over and laid two fingers on the pulse point in her neck. His heart rate dropped slightly when he felt her pulse still beating

strongly. He pushed his door open and groaned again with the movement as he pulled himself out of the car. He struggled as he pushed himself into a standing position and looked at where they had crashed. It was some kind of old steelworks, but that hardly mattered right now.

“Shit.” He muttered as he walked around to the passenger side off the car. The metal work had all folded inwards and, as he reached for the handle and pulled, had shifted to prevent the door from opening. He kicked the back wheel. “Piece of shit!” He checked on Y/N again before shutting his door and moving to inspect the windscreen. “What the hell?” He dragged his fingers through what appeared to be a clear slime, covering the entirety of where the window had shattered.

Movement behind him caused his head to whip up so fast it made his neck ache even more. He turned so his back was facing the car as a strange clicking noise echoed around him. He glanced around for the source but came up empty. Fear was beginning to crawl up his throat. “Who’s there?” When nothing else moved or made a noise he took a couple of steps forward. “Hey! I said, who’s there?”

He didn’t have chance to say anything else as something wrapped around his ankle and yanked him to the floor. It started pulling him towards the building. His hands scraped across the floor as he tried to find something to grip onto. He slammed painfully into a piece of sheet metal that had been lent against the side of the building. He screamed as whatever it was tugged him inside the building. He felt his legs drop off and realised it was pulling him down a set of stairs. He flung his arms out and managed to grab onto the railing on either side. Another scream tore from his throat as the pressure on his ankle increased and he was forced to let go of the railings.

His screams echoed through the building as whatever it was pulled him into the basement.

## 12. I Promise

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Blood, hospitals, broken bones, spoilers for season 3

Billy bolted up the stairs as soon as he managed to get away from that thing, that creature. His mind couldn't come up with any other word to comprehend what he had just seen. He tripped on the last step and went crashing to the floor. He turned to look back the way he came, before pushing himself up and sprinting out. The creature screeched behind him and he thanked all those hours he played basketball as he ran straight into the side of the Camaro. His breathing was erratic as he pulled open the door. A quick glance showed that Y/N was still as he left her, before he threw the car in gear and pushed the accelerator all the way to the floor. The tires screeched as the Camaro found grip and shot off into the night.

"Billy?" Y/N's voice nearly gave him a heart attack. He hadn't been driving more than a few minutes. She yelped in pain as she sat up, cradling her left arm to her chest. She knew it was broken before she even looked at the funny angle it was below her elbow. Her head was throbbing and her fingers came away red as she gingerly touched them to her head.

Billy's breathing was erratic as she looked him over. He looked terrified. His knuckles were white as he gripped the steering wheel, eyes blown wide, blood smeared across his forehead and he was covered in dirt, dust and grime. A quick look at her own clothes showed her that something else had happened other than the crash. She repeated his name again as he pulled the car over in front of a payphone.

"Stay here." He all but ran out of the car and flung the door to the payphone open. His hand shook as he pressed the only numbers that would work regardless or not if you had any change. He kept his eyes locked onto the Camaro, onto Y/N, as his mind flashed back to that creature.

“911, what’s your emergency?” A female voice drifted over the line. “Is someone there? Hello?”

His voice caught in his throat. What was his emergency? The creature that had dragged him down into the basement of some old steal works? The rats that had seemed to surround him as he hit the basement floor? The creature that had shoved some kind of tentacle down his throat and then practically just let him go?

The light above him began to flicker, he looked up before he put the phone back down on the stand. He stumbled out of the phone box as everything around him went dark. The floor seemed to be covered in vines as the sky flashed between black and red. The Camaro’s headlights were the only source of light, illuminating the surroundings enough so that he could see what appeared to be a group of people walking towards him, out of the mist that had settled.

As soon as the light had started flickering, Y/N tried the door handle. She groaned as it wouldn’t shift and instead pulled herself over into the driver’s seat. The movement sent a jolt up her arm and she bit her lip to stop herself crying out. The fear in Billy’s eyes, coupled with the flickering light had put her on edge. She opened the door as Billy walked into the middle of the road and spoke.

“What do you want?” His voice was quiet, laced with fear.

She looked around but couldn’t see anyone around, it was just them. He took a few steps forward before repeating the question.

“Hey, I said what do you want?” His voice increased in volume but once again he got no verbal reply from the group of people. “I said, what do you want!”

One of the figures split from the group as they came to a halt. As the figure approached, Billy took a few steps back. His eyes widened as he looked into the crystal blue of his own eyes staring back at him. The other version him was dressed in exactly the same clothes but was free of the injuries and the grime.

“To build. I want you to build.” The other version of him sounded

wrong, like he was speaking with multiple voices.

“To build what?” Billy’s voice was almost desperate as a thunder clap sounded above him.

Y/N reached out and carefully took Billy’s hand in her own. He kept his back to her, unaware that she had even reached him. Her left arm was cradled against her chest as she tried not to move it. The gasp that tore from her throat wasn’t from the pain though. Her grip tightened on Billy’s hand as her surroundings flashed and changed. Her eyes darted from the vines covering the floor, to the darkness, to the red flashes of lightning shattering across the sky. She had heard Will, Joyce and Hopper explain what the Upside Down looked like but her blood still ran cold. When her eyes moved past Billy, her heart stopped.

“What you see.” It was another version of him, clean and collected, but his voice sent shivers down Y/N’s spine. The other Billy locked his eyes onto her before the vision flickered and disappeared.

“I don’t understand.” Billy still wasn’t aware of Y/N’s presence behind him. He felt as if he was numb all over. “I don’t understand! What do you mean? I don’t understand!” He was screaming at the empty road.

“Billy?” Y/N tugged on his arm and he turned to look at her. His eyes were still wild as he glanced around them, wondering what had happened. “Billy, we need to leave.” Her voice was laced with fear, but her eyes told him she knew more about what had just happened.

“What was that?” He spun around before coming back to rest facing her.

“I’ll explain, I will. But we need to get out of here, and I need to go to the hospital.” She tried to keep the fear at bay to stay calm so she could think straight.

His eyes drifted down to her arm, which was still at a funny angle. He nodded and, with one last glance around, let her lead him back to the car. He helped her climb back into the passenger seat so she didn’t jolt her arm before he climbed in and set off in the direction of

the hospital.

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The scream that tore from Y/N's throat as they reset her arm caused Billy's heart to ache. They were sat on the edge of a hospital bed. She was sat between his legs, back against his chest, her right hand digging into his arm that was around her waist. The nurse had told him to keep her still before they had taken her left arm from where she was still cradling it against her chest. Billy buried his head in her hair as they rebroke the bone so it would heal in the right place. The snap made him feel sick and he couldn't help but blame himself for the crash. Y/N had assured him it wasn't, it had been the fault of whatever had hit them.

Y/N stayed pressed against Billy as they put the cast in place before wrapping it in a blue tape. Her head dropped onto his shoulder as they worked. She tried to keep her breathing steady but what she had seen when she took his hand back on the road was coursing through her mind. She knew she needed to find Hopper or Joyce as soon as she got out of here. Billy was unlikely to believe her on her own, definitely wouldn't with any of the kids or Steve, but with Joyce or especially Hopper, he would probably believe her.

The nurses cleaned the cuts on both of their heads before sticking a plaster over the area. Neither of them had spoken since they arrived and they sat side by side in silence as the nurses went to fetch the release and insurance forms. Y/N's right hand was gripping Billy's left as they waited. They quickly filled in the forms before walking out to where the Camaro was parked. It didn't look very pretty and Billy huffed as he laid eyes on it again. He helped her into the passenger seat again before setting off towards her house. The sun had already risen and was filtering through the trees as they drove past.

"You gonna explain what the hell happened now?" Billy didn't mean to sound so harsh but his head was throbbing and he was still terrified. The image of that thing and the feeling of it on his face kept repeating in his head.

"I will, I promise. But I have to find Hopper first." He went to talk but she held up her right hand. "I know you need to know, but I can't

explain it all on my own.”

“Okay.” He nodded as he pulled into her driveway. Her mom’s car was missing and Y/N wondered if she was out looking for them both. He climbed out and helped her out. She stood in front of him with her back to the door as he handed her the bag she had completely forgotten about.

“Stay home today. Don’t go to work. I’ll come round as soon as I’ve found Hopper.” She ran her hand down the collar of his jacket.

“Then you’ll explain?”

“Yeah, I promise.” She reached up on her tiptoes and pressed a gentle kiss to his lips. “Later, I promise.”

He made sure she got into the house before driving off to his own.

## 13. Where are You?

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Language, spoilers for season 3

Y/N glanced at the clock on the kitchen wall as she walked into the house. Five-thirty A.M. She groaned and dropped her bag onto the island. Everyone would still be in bed for at least another hour. She was about to head upstairs and try and catch a few hours of sleep when a piece of paper on the fridge caught her eye. She pulled it down and skimmed over the words.

*Hey Y/N,*

*Hope you didn't get home too late. I've had to run up to your Grandma's. She's fine but she had a fall and just needs some help for the next week or so. I've left some money upstairs for food and I'll call to check in tomorrow around midday.*

*Mom xx*

Fuck. Y/N lent her head onto the fridge. One of the few people that could help with this and she wasn't even here. Y/N glanced towards the phone and considered calling but she didn't want her grandma on her own, unable to do things for herself. She screwed her eyes shut. Why couldn't they just live their lives in peace? Why did something always have to come back to haunt them? It wasn't fair.

She screwed the note up and tossed it into the bin before climbing the stairs. She decided she would have a shower and then try to get some sleep. She made a mental note to set her alarm for nine at the latest as she grabbed some painkillers from the bathroom and swallowed them dry. She pulled her clothes off, with difficulty, and secured the bag the hospital had given her around the cast to stop it getting wet. She jumped in the shower and cleaned herself off as well as she could with only one arm. She regretted sending Billy home, she could have done with some help.

She dried off and wrapped herself in a towel. She briefly blow dried

her hair so that it wasn't dripping wet before walking into her bedroom. The early morning sun was already illuminating the room and the temperature had already started to climb out of the comfortable range. She closed her curtains before pulling on some pyjamas (one of Billy's shirts and some shorts) and collapsed under the covers. She fell straight to sleep, her alarm clock forgotten.

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Billy thanked whoever was watching over him that his dad had an early morning shift and had already left when he pulled the car up in front of the house. He walked straight through the house into the bathroom and glanced at himself in the mirror. He looked like shit and that was being kind. His hair was matted and he was completely covered in dirt and grime from head to toe. He rested his hands on either side of the sink and closed his eyes. That creature was all he could see so he snapped them open again.

He practically ripped off his clothes and dumped them into the laundry basket before turning the shower on. He set it to his usual temperature and let it run for a minute before climbing in.

He hissed and stepped out of the stream as the water seemed to scald him. He glanced down at the temperature gauge and saw that it hadn't moved from where he had set the previous night. He knitted his eyebrows together as he reached out and turned it down. He dismissed it and put it down to the heat outside and the mild concussion the doctor told him he had. The colder temperature felt much better.

It's better cold.

The words seemed to just appear in his mind fully formed, as if they had been spoken to him. He almost dropped the shower gel he was holding. He shook his head and once again blamed it on the concussion.

As soon as the grime was gone, he jumped out and dried off. He wrapped a towel around his waist and walked into his room. The exhaustion had finally caught up with him and he just collapsed onto his bed. He was out like a light.

---

Y/N was woken by the shrill tones of the phone ringing through the house. She groaned and buried her head further into her pillow. She was starting to drop back off to sleep when she recalled her mother's note: I'll call to check in tomorrow around midday. She sat bolt upright and immediately regretted it as her head throbbed painfully. She glanced at the clock and swore as she saw the time. One o'clock. In the afternoon. She had forgotten to set her alarm.

She stumbled out of bed, down the hall and practically ripped the phone off the stand. "Hello?"

"Hey, you and Billy have a good night?" Her mom's voice came down the line.

"Yeah, it was... alright." Y/N knew she would probably regret the lies she was telling later but she didn't know what else to do.

"Good, look I'll be back next week at some point, okay?"

"Yeah, that's fine."

"Okay, if you need anything just ask Joyce or Hopper. I've already called and told them I'm out of town so they might call to check in."

God, I hope they do, Y/N thought. "Yeah, mom, that's fine."

"Okay, I'll call again soon. Don't get into too much trouble."

"Wouldn't dream of it." Y/N gritted her teeth. "See you soon."

"Bye!"

The line went dead and Y/N leaned her head back against the wall and screwed her eyes shut. Her head was pounding and there was a dull ache all through her left arm. The cast was starting to get itchy but she didn't have time to worry about that. She pushed off the wall and walked back into her room. She got dressed into some plain shorts and one of Billy's t-shirts before walking downstairs. Her eyes drifted to the set of keys hanging in the kitchen. The set of keys that hadn't been touched since her dad had died. The keys to the dark

grey 1969 Ford Mustang that was sitting untouched in the garage. It had been her dad's pride and joy. He had spent years fixing it up from the state it had been in when he brought it. He only ever drove it on special occasions so she didn't even know if there would be fuel in the tank. She recalled the look on Billy's face when he had first seen it sitting in the garage and the way he had practically begged her to let him take it out for a spin. She had denied him based on the fact that her mom would kill her if they got so much as a scratch on the car.

Y/N thought, given the circumstances, she would risk her mother's wrath. She grabbed the keys off the rack and prayed that there was enough fuel in the tank to at least get her to the gas station. Then she could find Hopper or Joyce and tell Billy everything.

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Billy should have listened to Y/N. He was beginning to think that was the only advice he should ever follow. He had gone to work, even though she told him not to. He was only feeling a little off when he woke up so he thought he might as well go in and get some money. Now, he felt as though he was tripping the worst high of his life. He barely made it up into the lifeguard's chair. The sun seemed to be beating down with such ferocity that he felt like his entire body was on fire. To make it even worse, his mind kept flashing back to what had happened in that basement. He had convinced himself it was a hallucination but the images kept repeating in his mind.

The heat became too much and he suddenly felt his elbow burning. He looked down and there was a large welt appearing. He scrunched his eyebrows in confusion and practically fell out of the lifeguard's chair. His head was spinning and it took all of his concentration to put one foot in front of the other and head in the direction of the locker room. He slammed into somebody and sent an ice cooler spilling to the floor, ice and drinks went everywhere. He stumbled but regained his footing and started walking again.

"Billy? Are you okay?" Heather's voice seemed muted and wrong in his ears.

He made it to the showers and ripped the shower curtain back before

slamming the dial as cold as it would go. He braced his hands against the back of the shower as the water ran over him. His breathing was erratic but the water was finally beginning to give him some relief. That was, until he caught sight of his arm.

Black lines were crossing across his skin, coming from the burn on his elbow. "What?" He muttered to himself as he moved his other hand to touch the lines. An image shot through his head. A creature made of shadows illuminated by the same red flashes he had seen on the road last night. With the image came a sharp pain in his skull and he couldn't help the scream that tore from his throat. Everything seemed to get too load and he pushed his hands over his ears as he sank to the floor, the water still running.

"Billy?" Heather's voice seemed to cut through the noise and he moved his hands to the floor to steady himself.

Heather walked in front of the shower and slowly lowered herself to her knees. There was worry written all over her face. His screams had cut through her and she didn't know what to do. "Billy? Take me to him."

"What?" Billy shifted backwards slightly.

"I said are you hurt? What's going on? I heard screaming. Should I call an ambulance? Or Y/N? Billy?" His unresponsiveness was worrying her.

Billy felt something move inside his mind. Something that he could tell wanted to hurt Heather. He dug his fingers into his knee as he tried to fight whatever it was. But it was too strong and he lost the fight. Heather barely had time to scream before he had launched forward and wrapped his hand around her throat.

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Y/N slammed her head back into the head rest as tears threatened to spill down her cheeks. She couldn't find anyone. Joyce wasn't at work but she also wasn't at home. Hopper had been dealing with some stuff at the mayor's office when she went to the station but, by the time she got there, he was gone. Then the station told her he had

left early because he was going out to dinner and needed to get ready. She checked the cabin but not even Eleven was there. Then she went to her backup plan and went to the Wheeler's but Karen told her that Nancy was at work. The newspaper told her that Nancy and Jonathan had left early for 'girl problems' which Y/N didn't believe for a moment. So, she drove to the Byers' for a second time, but once again, no one was there. The mall would be closed by this time so she drove to Steve's house but his car wasn't in the drive so she didn't even bother knocking.

She didn't know what to do. She couldn't help but wonder if the reason she couldn't find anyone was tied to what had occurred the previous evening. The tears ran down her cheeks freely as she sat in the road outside Steve's house. It was getting late now and her head was throbbing again. Her arm ached as she pushed the car into drive again and set off to Billy's house. She knew he would be worried sick given that she promised she would see him as soon as she could and that had ended up being dusk.

She felt the pit in her stomach deepen when she pulled the car up in front of the Hargrove residence and the Camaro was missing from its usual spot. Neil's car was missing which meant that she could go up to the front door without fear of him being the one to open it. It was Susan who answered.

"Hi, Y/N." Susan's soft voice caught as she took in the teenager's appearance. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, is Billy here?" Y/N already knew the answer but she had to check.

"No, I haven't seen him all day. He was still in bed when I left this morning." Susan glanced up and down the road. "Do you want to come in for some tea?"

"Thank you but I've got to get going. My mom will worry if I'm gone too long." Y/N lied through her teeth. "Do you have any idea he is?"

"No, sorry. But I will get him to call you if he shows up." Susan smiled softly.

“Thank you. Bye.”

“Bye.” Susan shut the door as Y/N walked back to the car.

She hit her right hand against the steering wheel as more tears fell. She pulled off and headed home. “Billy, where are you?”

## 14. Missing Lifeguards

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

Y/N hardly slept. She spent half the night tossing and turning and then when she finally drifted off, her nightmares came back with renewed force. In them, she was running from a monster that she couldn't see. It sounded like the Demogorgon but she could tell from its thundering steps that it was much bigger. But each time it got close it would disappear and she would find her self stood in front of the community swimming pool. The water was stained red and there was a body floating face down in the water. The blood was so dark around the body that she couldn't tell who it was. She would move closer to the pool, intending to get a better look and that would be when she saw him.

Billy was standing on the opposite side of the pool. His hair was wet, the dark strands hanging in front of his eyes. He was in a white shirt and his red lifeguard shorts. Well she assumed the shirt had once been white. Crimson streaks ran down both of his arms, staining his shirt before dropping from his finger tips onto the floor below. His eyes snapped up and met hers. They were wild but also terrified. She found herself taking steps backwards, away from the edge of the pool.

"Y/N. I didn't- I didn't mean to." Billy's voice cut through the silence as he pleaded with her.

It was when she neared the entrance to the locker rooms that she heard the monster again. She didn't have time to turn and look at it before it grabbed her.

That was when she woke up. She must have had the same dream at least five times throughout the night. Each time she woke up in a cold sweat she wished Billy was there with her so she could just bury herself into him and push the images out of her mind. Instead she was met with empty sheets and the stifling hot heat that was yet to give way. It looked as if there was going to be a storm today though

so it might provide some relief.

At seven o'clock she gave up trying to sleep and swung her legs out of bed. Her arm was still throbbing away and her whole body had gained a dull ache. She stumbled into the bathroom and groaned at the sight of herself in the mirror. There were dark circles under her eyes and, while the gash on her forehead was healing, it was now surrounded by a purple bruise. At least part of it was hidden by her hair. She swallowed some painkillers before deciding that a shower was probably the best way to wake her up and get her ready for the day.

After awkwardly cleaning herself off with one arm, she walked downstairs and pulled some cereal out of the cupboard. While she ate, she made a mental list of the things she needed to do. The priority was finding Billy. Not knowing where he was, or if he was safe, was putting her on edge in a way she hadn't been since before Christmas. The fear in his eyes when she had woken up in the car scared her and she needed to know what he saw, and where they crashed. That was one detail still eluding her that she felt was going to be important. Whatever was happening had most likely started where ever it was. When she knew she could find Hopper and explain everything both to him and then to Billy.

As she grabbed her car keys and walked out of the house, she had a feeling that it was going to be another long, exhausting day.

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Billy's house had once again been a dead end. No one answered the door when she rang the bell and the Camaro was still missing from the drive. She vaguely remembered Billy saying something about Neil and Susan getting away for the weekend. The weather was beginning to change as she pulled out of Billy's road. By the time Y/N pulled into the swimming pool's parking lot, the heavens had opened. The rain battered down on the roof of the car as lightning strikes illuminated people running from the pool to their cars.

Y/N struggled to pull her coat over her cast before zipping it up and pulling the hood up. She braced herself before opening the car door and stepping out into the rain. It beat against her bare legs and her

trainers were soaked before she even had chance to lock the car. More water splashed up her legs where her feet connected with puddles as she ran past the vacating families into the main entrance. She pulled her coat off, the material clinging to the cast and restricting her movement. Billy's manager and one of the other guards didn't even look up from the magazines they were reading behind the front desk. She was about to walk up to them when she caught sight of a familiar head of red hair disappearing into the women's locker room.

"You do realise that the pool is shut, don't you?" Y/N's voice rang through the empty room and caused both Max and El to jump.

"What happened to you?" Max's eyes drifted from the damage to Y/N's head to the wrist cast.

"Me and Billy got into a car crash." Y/N caught sight of the photo in El's hand. "Do you know where he is? I can't find him anywhere."

Max and El shared a look that Y/N didn't like one bit.

"I found him last night." El said.

"We were playing a stupid game where we spun the bottle to see who we could find." Max quickly added to make sure it didn't sound like they were stalking her brother.

"He was with Heather. She was screaming. We found her bag in the bathroom at Max's. It was covered in blood." El finished.

Y/N's voice caught in her throat. "C-can you find them, now?"

"That's the plan." Max said.

"Okay. What do you need?" Y/N and Max turned to El.

Max went and turned on all of the showers to create the white noise El needed as Y/N ran back to her car. She grabbed the roll of Duct tape from the boot before carefully stealing one of the dive masks from the equipment room. She helped El cover the mask in the tape as Max walked back in. Y/N and Max perched on the wooden benches as El sat cross legged on the floor, the photo of Heather in

front of her.

“What do you see?” Max asked.

“A door. A red door.” El murmured.

All of a sudden El’s breathing started to increase and she tore the mask off.

“What happened? El?” Y/N moved so she was kneeling in front of the younger girl. “It’s okay, breathe.”

Max shot Y/N a worried look as El buried her face in her hands.

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“Is this it?” Y/N asked as she pulled the car up in front of the house.

“Yes.” El’s eyes were trained on the red front door.

After they had managed her to calm down, El had told them that she had seen Heather screaming for help. They managed to drop one of the Mustang’s back seats and cram Max’s bike into the car before all jumping in and setting off. Y/N knew the road Heather lived on but not the exact house so she was relying on El to tell her which.

“Let’s go then.” Y/N pulled her coat over her cast again as the three of them climbed out of the car.

The rain was still hammering against the floor as they made their way to the front door. El used her powers to unlock the door and it swung inwards. They glanced at each other before walking in. Soft music was drifting through the house as they walked into the hallway. The hall was lined with staged photos of the family. The kind that people took to make it seem like everything was sunshine and rainbows.

Laughter echoed from the dining room, causing them all to look towards it. Y/N set off in the direction it came from, the two younger girls in tow. They walked in on Heathers parents sat at either end of the table, Billy in the middle of them. Everyone turned to look at the three intruders as they walked in.

“Billy?” Y/N’s voice caught in her throat as she looked at him. He was wearing a light blue shirt, the one he had worn the first time he met her mom. The gash on his head was completely gone.

“Y/N.” Billy’s eyes moved past her. “Max.”

“We didn’t mean to... barge in.” Max stuttered out.

“We tried to knock, but maybe you didn’t hear us over the storm.” Y/N managed to add, her eyes still trained on Billy.

“I’m sorry, who is this dripping all over my living room right now?” Heather’s dad asked, looking over the three girls. His eye lingered on Y/N’s cast and bruise.

“I’m sorry. Janet. Tom.” Billy gestured to Heather’s parents. “This is my girlfriend, Y/N, and my sister, Maxine.” Billy wiped his mouth on his napkin before standing up.

“Oooh!” Janet exclaimed.

Billy walked over to them. “What on earth are you doing here? Is something wrong?” He pressed a kiss to Y/N’s temple as he dropped his hand into her back pocket, effectively pulling her against him.

“Looking for you.” Y/N said her eyes meeting his. She searched for something but his eyes seemed emotionless. Something was wrong, she just didn’t know what. “Where’ve you been? I couldn’t find you.”

“Where is she?” El interjected.

Billy moved his eyes from Y/N. “I’m sorry. Where is who?”

“Well, they’re a little burnt, I’m sorry...” Heather drifted off as she noticed the three newcomers. She was holding a tray of cookies in her hands.

“Heather!” Billy exclaimed. “You already know Y/N, but this is my sister, Maxine and I’m sorry, I did not quite catch your name.” He turned to look at El.

“El.”

“El. Now what is it you were saying, El? You were looking for somebody?” Billy’s voice was off, almost passive aggressive. Y/N tried to step away from but his hand moved to her hip and kept her against him.

“I-I-I saw...” El stammered. “I saw you-”

“Your manager!” Max cut her off. “At the pool.”

“He said you guys didn’t come into work today, so we got worried.” Y/N looked Heather over. Something about her seemed off as well.

“Heather wasn’t feeling so hot today, so we thought we’d take the day off to nurse her back to health.” Billy looked at Heather. “But you’re feeling just fine now, aren’t you, Heather?”

“I’m feeling so much better.” Heather nodded enthusiastically. “Do you guys want a cookie? They’re fresh out of the oven!”

“Thank you! But we better get going. I’ve got to get these two home.” Y/N plastered a smile on her face.

“I’ll walk you out.” Billy’s smile seemed equally as fake.

The four of them walked to the front door and Y/N turned to the girls. “You guys go to the car. I’ll meet you there in a minute.” She handed Max the keys. They nodded before walking out of the door. Billy’s eyes followed them as Y/N kicked the door shut.

“Hey.” She moved her hand to his chin and pulled him to look at her. “What’s going on? Where’ve you been?”

He rested both of his hands on her hips. “Nothing’s going on and I just told you.”

“What about the other night? Billy, what happened when we crashed?”

“You broke your arm and we had to go to the hospital.”

“You know that’s not what I meant.”

He laughed. "Nothing else happened, Y/N. I've got no idea what you mean." The dead look was still in his eyes and his grip tightened on her hips. "I think you better get going, don't want the girls waiting."

"Call me tomorrow, promise me." Y/N ran her thumb over his cheekbone. He was starting to worry her but she didn't know what to say.

"Of course." He moved his hand to her face and pulled her towards him. His lips connected with hers and there was nothing sweet about the kiss. It was harsh, possessive and lacking any compassion. He pulled back, her lip between his teeth. "See you later." He moved past her and opened the door.

"Bye." She looked at him one last time before stepping out into the rain.

"That was weird, right?" Max asked as soon as she climbed into the car and shut the door.

"Yeah. Yeah." Y/N muttered.

"Can you stay at mine tonight? I mean El's staying and my mom and Neil are out and..."

Y/N cut off Max's rambling. "Yeah, of course. I'll sleep in Billy's room."

She pushed the car into gear and set off, wondering what was the hell had just happened in that house.

## 15. Unsettling News

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

For the second time this week, Y/N was woken by the phone ringing. She sat up and looked at her surrounding with a blurry eyed confusion. It took her several moments to realise that she was in Billy's room. The phone cut off as someone picked it up. Y/N flopped back down and looked up at the ceiling. She had only ever woken up in this room a handful of times. Each of those times had been like this; when Billy's dad was out of town. He refused to let her be anywhere near Neil. But this was the first time she was here without Billy.

Billy's room was a reflection of both him and his home life. There were several ash trays dotted around the room and the smell of smoke had permeated every surface. A few posters were dotted across the wall (he had removed the poster of the blonde in the bikini before the first time she had stopped over). His stereo system and record player took up the largest part of the room other than the bed. His record collection splayed across the floor beneath it. There was also a cassette player in the room. His love of music was definitely the most prominent part of him in the room. His dressing table was made up of stacked crates. Something Y/N knew was because Neil had refused to by him one. So, he made do with what he had. She also knew she was the only one who knew about the collection of paper backs hidden under his bed and in the bottom of his wardrobe. His best kept secret because he knew what his father would say if he found them.

Y/N was pulled out of her thoughts by loud knocking followed by the door opening.

"Morning." She yawned as Max appeared in the doorway.

"Morning." Max paused as she tried to find the right words. "Mike called, said it's a code red and we need to go to his right now. Could you drive us, please?"

“Yeah, of course. Give me twenty minutes.” Y/N smiled and stood up from the bed.

“Thank you!” Max called as she shut the door.

Y/N walked over to Billy’s drawers and pulled the bottom one out. She shifted his shirts to one side and pulled out some clean underwear. She kept a stash of things (clean underwear and toiletries) there after the first night she had spent here and had nothing she needed the next morning. She threw off Billy’s shirt and shorts she had slept in and pulled the underwear on. She pulled her shorts from the previous day on and then ransacked Billy’s closet for a clean shirt. She threw her hair up into a ponytail to get it out of her face. After that, she grabbed her toiletries and walked into the bathroom.

Ten minutes later the three of them were driving to Mike’s. Y/N pulled up in front of the Wheeler’s and Max turned to her. “You should probably come too. Mike sounded... scared.”

“Sure.” She threw the hand break on and followed the two younger girls to the basement door.

“The hell happened to you?” Mike asked as she walked in. Will and Lucas were also looking at her arm and head with concern.

“Me and Billy got into a car crash.” She brushed them off and sat down in one of the chairs. “So, what’s the code red?”

Everyone sat down and looked at Will. “I didn’t think it was anything at first. I mean, I think I just didn’t want to believe it. The first time I felt it was at Day of the Dead.”

“The power went out that night too.” Mike cut in.

“And then I felt it again. At the field, near the Nelson farm the next day. Then again yesterday outside Castle Byers.” Will glanced around them all.

“What does it feel like?” Max asked.

“It’s almost like... You know when you drop on a roller coaster?”

There was a chorus of yes's and one no from El

"It's like, everything inside your body is just sinking all at once, but this is worse." Will explained. "Your body... It goes cold and- and you can't breathe. I've felt it before, whenever he was close."

"Whenever who was close?" Y/N leaned forward and rested her elbows on her knees; praying Will wouldn't say what she thought he was going to.

"The Mind Flayer." Will told her.

"I closed the gate." El said.

"I know, but... What if he never left?" Will looked scared. "What if we locked him out here with us?"

Everyone stared at him in confusion so he shot to his feet. He walked across to a set of drawers and pulled out a sheet of paper and a piece of charcoal. He walked back over and put the paper down. They all moved to stand around him "This is him. All of him." He roughly drew a monster with six legs in the middle of the paper. "But that day on the field, a part of him attached itself to me." He wiped his palm against the image and showed them his hand, now dusted with charcoal. "My mom got it out of me, and Eleven closed the gate." He flipped the paper. "But the part of that was still in me, what if it's still in our world? In Hawkins." He slapped his hand against the paper, leaving behind a hand print.

"I don't understand. The Demodogs died when El closed the gate." Max chipped in. "If the brain dies the body dies."

"We can't take any chances. We have to assume the worst." Mike said. "The Mind Flayer is back."

"Yeah, and if he is, he'd want to attach himself to someone again. A new me." Will added.

"A new host." Lucas looked unsettled.

Y/N's breath caught in her throat and she was back on the road, with Billy after the crash. She got to her feet and walked a few steps away

from the kids. "How can you tell if someone is a host?"

"Why?" Mike asked as she turned back to face them. "You saw something didn't you?"

"No- yes- I don't know." Y/N ran her hand over her face. "I was knocked out when we crashed. I don't know where we crashed or what happened but when I came round... Billy, he was terrified and covered in dirt. He pulled up to a pay phone and told me to stay in the car as he got out. He picked up the phone but the lights started flickering and he put it down. He walked into the middle of the street and started yelling."

"At what?" Max asked.

"Nothing I could see. So, I got out of the car and walked over to him. He didn't seem to notice me, just kept yelling. I took his hand and..." She bit her lip. "The entire world seemed to flicker. Like everything got dark and the sky kept flashing red and the floor was covered in vines."

"The Upside Down." Will realised.

"I guess so. It looked how you described it. But that wasn't the worst thing. There were people."

"People?" El asked.

"Yeah, like a big group of them stood in the middle of the road. But I could only recognise one because he stepped forward. It was... It was Billy."

Mike looked confused. "What do you mean?"

"I mean Billy was stood next to me, but he was also stood in front of us. The other him, was different. He was wearing the same clothes but he was clean and he sounded wrong. Like there were multiple people speaking at the same time."

"That's why you were looking for him yesterday." Max said and Y/n nodded. "So, how do we know for sure if it's him?"

“We have to find him first.” Mike said. “D’you know where he’ll be?”

“His shift at the pool starts in about five minutes.” Y/N said. “But I can’t fit you all in my car.”

“You take Max and El and we’ll meet you there.” Mike said.

“Alright, see you in around twenty minutes.” Y/N said as they all set off.

## 16. The Sauna Test

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

It took fifteen minutes for the boys to join the at the pool. In that time, the three girls were already dying in the heat; even with the car windows open and aircon on full blast. When they did arrive, the girls got out of the Mustang and joined the boys in front of it. That way they were partially hidden from view while still being close enough to see Billy. He was sat in the lifeguard chair wearing a cap, a long-sleeved sweatshirt, sunglasses and had a towel draped over his legs. There was a cup of ice chips in his left hand as he messed with his lighter with his right.

“I don’t know. He looks pretty normal to me.” Max said as she moved the binoculars Mike had brought with him away from her eyes.

“Normal?” Lucas scoffed. “How many times have you seen him with a shirt on?”

“I mean, it’s a little weird.” Y/N took the binoculars from Max and looked at him. Other than the amount of clothes he was wearing, he did look pretty normal.

“More than a little.” Mike chimed in. “He was in a tub with ice. The Mind Flayer likes it cold. Plus, everything else-”

Max cut him off. “But he’s lounging at the pool, which is, like, the least Mind Flayer thing ever.”

“Not necessarily.” Everyone turned to look at Will, whose eyes were locked onto Billy. “The Mind Flayer likes to hide. He only used me when he needed me. It’s like- like you’re dormant. And then, when he needs you, you’re activated.”

“Okay, so we just wait until he gets activated.” Max didn’t sound like she was asking.

“No. What if he hurts someone?” Mike said.

“Or kills someone.” Will added.

“Good point.” Y/N spoke up. “We can’t take that chance. We need to find out for sure if he’s the host.” Then it clicked. “Does the men’s changing room still have a sauna?”

Mike caught on immediately. He gestured towards Will and Lucas to follow him.

“Where are you going?” Max asked looking confused.

“I have an idea.” He nodded towards Y/N. “Boys only.”

“Seriously?” Max looked as if she was going to murder him.

“Just trust him on this one.” Y/N said as she took the binoculars back. “If the sauna’s still there, then we might be able to use it.”

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They spent the rest of the afternoon planning and collecting everything they were going to need to enact the plan. That included things from chains, to bolt the door shut, to the pool’s CPR dummy, which would act as bait to get Billy into the sauna. A walkie-talkie strapped to the dummy would hopefully be loud enough for Billy to hear and get him exactly where they wanted him.

Billy always showered when he was done with his shifts (Y/N wouldn’t admit it to the kids, but she knew that because she had joined him on several occasions when the pool had been deserted). Tonight, it was no different. Darkness had already fallen when Billy switched the water off and wiped a hand over his face to clear the stray drops running from his hair. He pulled his towel down and wrapped it around his waist before making his way to the locker room.

He pulled his jeans out of his locker and glanced briefly at the strip of photos he had stuck on the inside of the door. Y/N had managed to get him to go into the photobooth at the mall just after it had first opened. The first two were normal photos, one where they were both smiling at the camera, one where he had pulled her onto his lap and had his head on her shoulder. The third photo was them both

laughing because they didn't know what funny faces to pull. That one was his favourite because they both looked so carefree; like normal teenagers. In the final two they were pulling cliché funny faces, one with their tongues stuck out and one with Y/N throwing a peace sign and laughing as Billy flipped off the camera with a smirk.

As he hopped into his jeans, he briefly recalled that he had seen her the night before. But it was hazy, as if he had drunk too many drinks at a party. That seemed to be happening a lot at the minute. He had blanks in his memory or times when he could only remember part of what happened. He knew he needed to find Y/N and talk to her.

The changing room door slamming open caught his attention as he buttoned his jeans.

"Pools closed!" The sound of doors shifting continued. "Hey. Do you hear me?" He slammed his locker door shut, the photos dislodging and falling to the floor, as he raced around the corner. "Pool is closed!" His voice trailed off as he hit against the door that he thought had opened. It was still locked. He tried it several more times but it just slammed against the lock. The lights cut out and his heart jumped into his throat.

"Billy!" It was Mike's voice that rang out from the walkie-talkie in the sauna, but Billy didn't know that.

Billy started to slowly move back into the locker room, the volume of his voice had decreased dramatically. "Who's there?"

"Billy!" Mike taunted again as Will and Lucas slammed on a few lockers.

"Who's there?" Billy's voice gained volume again. Laughter echoed off the walls as Billy walked down the shower cubicles and ripped back all the curtains.

"Billy! Billy!" Mike continued to sing-song.

"You think this is funny, huh?"

He was met with more laughter. "Billy. Come and find me."

"I find you; it is your funeral." Billy rounded the corner in time to see the door leading to the gym slowly closing (courtesy of Y/N and Max).

"Come and get me. Come on!" Mike continued to taunt him to get him into the other room. "Billy!"

Billy stormed through as Mike laughed again. He caught sight of the dummy in the sauna that Y/N and Will had positioned to look like a real person.

"Got you." Billy laughed and clapped his hands together as he made his way towards the sauna.

"Come and get me, you piece of shit." Mike said as Billy pulled the door open.

The confusion was clear on his face as he came face to face with the pool's CPR dummy, hanging from the ceiling at just the right angle, in one of the red pool shirts, with a walkie-talkie strapped to it. He walked forward and seized it by its 'neck'.

"Hey." Mike's voice rang out once more. "Behind you." Billy spun around

"Hi." Eleven threw her head back as Billy advanced and sent him flying back into the sauna. He hit the back wall with such force that some of the tiles cracked and fell to the floor.

"Now!" Mike yelled as the rest of them ran into the room and turned the light on.

El used her powers to slam the door shut as Billy got back to his feet. Lucas slipped the pole they had found through the door handle and the nearby pipe, and Will and Y/N (as best as she could with a broken arm) secured the heavy metal chain round it to make sure it stayed shut. Finally, Lucas closed the padlock between the chain and they all moved backwards apart from Y/N. She moved towards the heat dial as Billy slammed on the door a few times.

"Max?" He was right up against the glass looking out at the group of kids, Y/N just out of his eyeline.

Y/N looked towards her. “Do it.”

Y/N nodded and turned the dial all the way to the top. Only then did she take a step backwards and met Billy’s eyes. There was a myriad of emotions swimming through his eyes.

“Y/N? What- What’s going on?” His eyes followed her as she moved so she was stood directly in front of the window.

“I can’t explain right now, not until we’re sure. I’m sorry.” She could already feel the tears beginning to form on her lash line as he looked like a wounded animal.

“Y/N! Max! Let me out of here!” Billy did what he always did when he was confused; he lashed out. He started hitting the door again. The steam was starting to fill the room, making it harder for him to catch a breath. “Let me out. You kids, you think this is funny? You kids think this is some kind of sick prank, huh? You little shits think this is funny? The hell have they roped you into Y/N? What is this? Open the door.” He hit the door. “Open the door!” Another hit. “Open the door!” Hit. “Open the goddamn door!” Suddenly he disappeared from vision and they heard him hit the floor. Then the screaming started.

“Billy!” Y/N ran forward to look through the door, Max on her heels.

Will moved to the temperature gauge. “We’re at 220.” Will moved back to the group.

Y/N looked through the door and found Billy curled up on the floor, his knees pulled into his chest as sobs racked through his body.

“It’s not my fault. It’s not my fault.” He looked up as Y/N and Max appeared. “It’s not my fault, Y/N, Max. I promise you, it’s not my fault.”

“Honey, what’s not your fault?” As soon as the words left Y/N’s lips, he started to cry harder. Y/N found herself reaching for Max’s hand, which she gladly gave.

“I’ve done things, Y/N.” He brought his hands up in a prayer motion. “Really bad things. I didn’t mean to. He made me do it.”

“Who made you do it?” Max asked as Y/N’s voice caught in her throat, the tears running freely down her cheeks.

“I don’t know, it’s like a shadow.” Y/N squeezed Max’s hand and Max squeezed back. “Like a giant shadow. Please, Max.” His eyes shifted back to Y/N.

“What did he make you do, Billy?” Y/N’s voice cracked as she looked at him.

“It’s not my fault, okay?” He started crying harder and lent to the side so his head was resting against the wooden bench. Y/N, please. Please, believe me, it’s not my fault. I tried to stop him, okay? I did. Please believe me, Y/N. Please believe me.”

“Billy, it’s gonna be okay.” Max said as tears started to fall down her cheeks.

“Please.” He sounded broken

“It’s gonna be okay.” Y/N repeated Max’s words. “We want to help you. We want to help you. You just have to talk to us, okay? You have to talk to us. I believe you, Billy.” Y/N was getting desperate. Neither her nor Max saw him reaching for a shard of tile that had fallen from the wall.

“We’ll figure it out together, okay?” Max added. “We need you to trust us. Please.”

“I feel him. He’s activated.” Will warned Mike.

“Max, Y/N get away from the door.” Mike said.

Max turned in shock. “What?”

“Get away from the door!”

Y/N barely managed to grab Max and shift them both to the side as Billy came smashing through the window in the door. She immediately pushed Max behind her.

“Let me out, you bitch! Let me out! I’ll fucking gut you!” Billy roared

as he slashed at them with the tile. "Let me out!" He screamed and ripped the metal pole from between the handle and the pipe. It went flying towards Y/N and Max, snapping Y/N out of her shock enough to move them both towards the others. At that moment, Lucas used his wrist rocket and hit Billy smack in the forehead, causing him to fall back.

They all looked around as the lights started to flicker violently. Billy began to shake and black lines started to run across his skin as he pulled himself to his feet. He was trying so hard to fight against it before it got complete control again, but just like the last few times, it was not a fight he could win. The sound that escaped his throat was more like a roar than a scream. It was so much more animalistic.

He ran at the door and threw his whole body weight against it. El moved in front of the others and extended her arms to shield them.

"He can't get out, can he?" Max asked, her hand still secured in Y/N's, the girls taking comfort in each other.

Lucas shook his head violently. "No way. No. Way."

Billy threw himself against it again and the pipe started to bend and give way. The next time, the middle of section of the pipe flew loose and the door went flying, Billy coming with it.

El pushed them all backwards as he got to his feet. Billy looked at them all with a vacant expression that was just pure anger and rage. El lifted her hand and the weight from the bench press lifted off the stand. She screamed as she sent it towards him. He tried to grab it but he just slammed into the wall, the weight pressing against his throat. El moved to stand in front of him as she brought up her other hand. She grunted with the effort and the weight started to cut into the wall, pressing harder against Billy's neck to the point that his feet were barely touching the floor.

"Don't hurt him!" Y/N's voice cut through the air and the others had to grab her to stop her running to him.

She hadn't needed to worry though because a second later Billy was pushing the weight away from himself. Y/N stopped trying to fight

the others as the gap between his neck and the bar increased. They all froze, knowing all too well that Billy wouldn't have the strength to do that. El screamed as she tried to push it back towards him but with one last push, he sent the weight flying towards her.

El dropped to the floor to avoid getting hit by the weight that came flying towards her. Billy steadied himself back on his feet and sent a quick glance to the others. They were all stood frozen in shock. He reached down and grasped El's hair, causing her to scream and claw at his arm, before pulling her head back at a funny angle. She had exhausted herself to the point where she could barely fight back. He looked back at Mike and was about to wrap his hand around her throat when Y/N forced herself between them. Billy dropped El to the floor, more out of shock than Y/N's strength and Y/N took the opportunity to push the younger girl behind her. El immediately falling to the floor as her legs gave out.

Y/N didn't have time to prepare for Billy's hand wrapping around her neck. She gasped in pain as his grip tightened to cut off her air supply. He got up from his knees, taking her with him. She clawed at his hand with the one that wasn't in the cast as her feet left the floor. She kicked out at him but she was quickly losing any strength she had.

"Billy, please." She tried as her eyes started to roll into the back of her head.

Mike had managed to move El away from the pair of them and caught sight of the metal pole that had been through the door. He picked it up and hit Billy across the back with it. Billy went crashing to the floor, taking Y/N with him. His grip on her neck released and she gasped for air.

"Go to hell, you piece of shit!" Mike screamed as he brought the pipe down again.

But this time Billy was expecting it, he brought a hand up and caught it. He stood up and ripped it out of Mike's grip with so much force that it went hurtling across the room. He started backing Mike up into the wall. He raised a hand to wrap around Mike's neck, but before he could, his feet were suddenly no longer toughing the floor.

El screamed with the effort as she got to her feet, lifting Billy higher. A scream tore through his throat too as he tried to get out of her grasp. El moved around him so she was stood in front of Mike. They were both screaming at each other with the effort, before she moved both her arms and threw him straight through one of the brick walls onto the grass outside.

It was only then, that they all felt like they could breath again. El fell backwards but Mike was waiting to catch her. Both of them sank to the floor crying. Y/N managed to push herself into a sitting position as Max, Lucas and Will rushed over to her. She let them pull her to her feet as Mike pulled El to her feet. They all turned to the new hole in the wall in time to see Billy sprinting away into the distance.

"I need ice." Y/N's voice scared her, let alone the kids. She stumbled back through into the locker room with the intention of going to the freezer. But she froze as she caught sight of the strip of photos on the floor. She knelt down to pick them up. The tears came back as she looked at them and her legs gave out. She collapsed back against the lockers and buried her head in her arm.

"Here." She didn't even hear Max walk through the room, but here she was holding out an ice pack.

"Thanks." Y/N took it and rested it against the bruise she could feel forming on her throat.

"We can all sleep at mine if you want?" Mike's question was directed at everyone but he was mainly looking at Y/N.

"Yeah, yeah, that's a good idea." She pushed herself off the floor, the pictures clutched in her hand. "You alright cycling back?"

"Yeah, just wait for us around the corner and I'll come and get you when we're past my mom." Mike said.

Y/N nodded and led El and Max out to the car. Tonight, was going to be long and restless.

## 17. The Next Steps

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

Y/N was woken up the following morning by Max. Her head was throbbing even more than the previous day as she sat up on the sofa she had been sleeping on. To make matters worse her arm was aching and her throat felt so tight she wasn't sure if she'd be able to speak.

"Here, you should take these." Max said holding out a pack of painkillers and a glass of water.

"Thanks." Y/N's voice sounded rough and she struggled to swallow the painkillers. She got to her feet, grabbed her bag off the floor and ruffled El's hair before passing into the bathroom.

A quick look in the mirror told her she looked as bad as she felt, if not worse. Her cast was covered in dust, making the blue bandage look more grey; the bruise on her head had darkened overnight and the mark on her neck had turned from red to purple. The mark Billy's hand had left. She pushed that thought away as soon as it appeared. It wasn't Billy. She bit her lip to hold back the tears that threatened to fall as she reached into her bag. Luckily, she'd stopped off at her house and Max's on the way to Mike's the night before to get her, El and Max some spare clothes and toiletries. She changed and freshened up before walking back into the main room.

"What do we do now?" Max asked.

"We need to find Hopper." Y/N sat on the sofa arm as the kids all looked at her. "But I couldn't find him anywhere the other day when I was looking."

"I can find him." El spoke up

Everyone exchanged a glance before they all nodded. It was easier to get everything set up in Mike's basement than it had been in the swimming bath changing rooms. The TV was easily turned to static

and Mike already had a bandana. When everything was set in place, they all sat around the coffee table and let El do her thing.

After a few minutes, El broke the silence. "I found him."

"Where is he?" Max asked as blood started running from El's nose.

"Woods."

"Woods?" Lucas echoed.

"He's with... Will's mom."

"My-my mom?" The confusion very evident on Will's face.

"What are they doing?" Y/N asked, wondering if this was why she hadn't been able to find anyone when she was looking.

"Ill-annoy, they're going to ill-annoy." El sounded out.

A sudden knock on the door made them all jump. "Mike! Breakfast!"

"Not now mom!" Mike screamed back before turning back to El. "Illinois? Illinois, like the state? The state of Illinois?"

"Il-ill-annoy." El shrugged.

"Awesome." Y/N muttered as she laid back on the sofa and slung her good arm over her eyes. This week just kept getting better and better.

Max took El into the bathroom to clean up the blood from her nose as Mike got up and started pacing. "Something's not right. I can't get Hopper off my back all summer and now, all of a sudden, he's hiking with Will's mom to Illinois? And Dustin's MIA too? I mean this can't be a coincidence."

"What does it matter?" Lucas interrupted. "Bottom line is, they're not here. It's up to us."

Mike shot him a glare. "Up to us to do what exactly?"

"Find Billy and stop him." Lucas glanced at Y/N as she sat up and ran her good hand over her face.

“Okay, yeah, that’s a really nice sentiment, but even if El could find him again, and that’s a pretty big if, then what?” Mike looked from Lucas to Y/N.

“We find a way to save him, like we did for Will.” Y/N said, shooting Will a glance. He’d been very quiet throughout all of this.

“Yeah, we burn the shit out of him and make sure he doesn’t escape this time.” Lucas said grabbing the box of cocoa puffs off the table and taking a couple.

“Okay, then what?” Mike challenged.

“Then we win.” Lucas stated.

“No, see, that’s the problem. We don’t. We don’t win.” Mike was getting more agitated. “We got the mind flayer out of Will before and he just came right back. We don’t just have to stop Billy; we have to stop the mind flayer.”

“How in the hell do we do that?” Lucas asked.

“I don’t know.” Mike sighed.

Will spoke up for the first time. “Maybe El does.”

The three boys all got up and looked at the bathroom door.

“What are they still doing in there?” Mike huffed.

“I don’t know, girls just like hanging out in bathrooms.” Lucas said through a mouthful of cocoa puffs.

“Why?” Mike asked.

“Because they don’t want you to over hear them.” Y/N told them as she grabbed a handful of cocoa puffs from Lucas.

“They’re conspiring against me.” Mike said with complete seriousness.

Y/N snorted and Will turned to Mike in disbelief. “That’s what you’re

concerned about right now?”

“It’s not my main concern. It’s just a sub concern.” Mike defended himself.

“I thought it was already over.” Will shot back.

“It’s not over okay, we’re just taking a break.” Mike didn’t sound convinced.

“She said she dumped your ass. That doesn’t sound like a break.” Will whisper-screamed.

Y/N snorted again. “Sounds like it’s over.”

“Yeah! Listen to Y/N!” Max’s voice came through the door. “You guys do realise we can still hear everything you’re saying right?”

Max and El started laughing and Y/N had to join in.

“Conspiring.” Mike whispered to the boys. “I told you they’re conspiring.”

Someone loudly knocked on the door.

“Not now mom!” Mike screamed.

“Mike, open the door!” Nancy shouted back.

Mike ran up the stairs and flung the door open to reveal Nancy and Jonathan. They moved past him and descended the stairs as Mike shut and locked the door again.

Y/N got straight to her feet and threw her arms around them both. They both took one look at the state of her and quickly returned the gesture. They pulled back with a shocked look.

“What happened to you?” Nancy said, her eyes going wide as they bounced from her cast to her head to her throat.

“I was in a car accident caused by the mind flayer and now Billy’s possessed and then he tried to kill us because we locked him in a

sauna and now we don't know where he is and Hopper and Joyce are apparently walking to Illinois and I can't find Steve anywhere." Y/N knew she was rambling but she it was just the relief of finally seeing them both. "Where the hell have you both been? I've been looking for you for two days."

Nancy and Jonathan just looked at her with wide eyes before looking to the five kids behind them.

"We've seen it too." Nancy said before she launched into a full explanation about rats eating fertiliser and an old woman doing the same and being taken to hospital. "It was the same thing, the exact same thing that happened to Will last year. And look at this, look at the body temperature." Nancy handed Y/N a medical sheet.

"Did you steal this?" Y/N asked as she took a look at the scarily low numbers on the sheet before handing it to the kids.

"He likes it cold." Will said.

"Okay," Mike started. "so, this crazy old woman who was eating fertiliser,"

"Mrs Driscoll." Nancy interjected.

"Right, yeah, Mrs Driscoll, what time was this attack?"

"Last night."

"Right, but what time last night?"

"Around 9."

"You waited all night to call?" Jonathan suddenly butted in.

"I-I was waiting for the doctors to run some tests." Nancy said. Y/N glanced between the pair, it looked like Mike and El weren't the only ones having relationship issues.

"You weren't there?" Will sounded personally offended.

Jonathan threw his hands up in surrender. "Well, I'm here now,

aren't I?"

"Hallelujah." Nancy rolled her eyes.

Everyone else shared an awkward glance as Lucas muttered a soft "oooh".

"Um, so, wha-what time was your... sauna test?" Nancy said ignoring the awkwardness and getting back to the real issue.

"Around 9." The five kids and Y/N said at the same time.

"Well that proves it. That proves my theory." Nancy seemed pleased with herself.

"She's flayed, just like Billy." Mike said.

"Flayed?" Jonathan raised an eyebrow.

"The mind flayer, he flays people. Takes over their mind. Once they do that, they basically become him." Mike explained.

"If there are two flayed-" Lucas started.

"We have to assume there are more." Will finished.

"The other people on the road." Y/N suddenly realised.

Everyone turned to look at her as Nancy spoke up. "What?"

"After we crashed, Billy started yelling at something in the middle of the road, but there was nothing there. So, I walked up to him and as I got close, he said 'to build what'. I took his hand to try and get him back in the car and we weren't alone anymore."

"What do you mean?" Jonathan asked.

"Everything flickered and got dark and there was another Billy standing across from us with all these people behind him."

"Okay, but I still don't get it." Nancy said.

"The other Billy answered Billy's question. He said 'what you see'. He

wants to build an army of flayed for something.” As Y/N finished the room got very quiet.

“Heather.” El broke the silence, her eyes going wide. “Billy was doing something to her. She was scared. She was screaming. Bad screams.”

“What’s a good scream?” Lucas seemed genuinely curious.

“Max said-”

“Doesn’t matter.” Max quickly interjected with an embarrassed look to Y/N. Who just looked as puzzled as Lucas.

“I’m sorry, I’m lost, who is Heather?” Nancy asked.

“Heather Holloway.” Y/N answered. “She works with Billy at the pool.”

Nancy and Jonathan’s eyes got wide as they spoke together. “Tom.

## 18. Heather's House

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

After Nancy and Jonathan had explained that their boss at the newspaper, Heather's dad Tom, had been acting strange the last time they saw him. The group decided to head over to Heather's house to see if anyone was there or anything was out of the ordinary. Nancy and Jonathan got the boys into the Wheeler's station wagon as Y/N got the girls back into her mustang. As they had only been to Heather's house two days ago, Y/N had Nancy follow her there. They pulled straight up the drive and parked the cars before regrouping and walking up to the front door.

Nancy rang the doorbell as Jonathan and Y/N moved the stand beside her, the kids stood behind them. When they heard no movement, Nancy pressed the bell again. There was still no movement so the three older teenagers looked at each other before turning and looking at El. She concentrated on the door, gave an upwards nod and the door was flung open.

Y/N and Nancy crossed the threshold first and their eyes were immediately drawn to an upturned rug at the end of the hall. Jonathan and the kids were hot on their heels as Nancy called out. "Tom?"

When she got no response, Y/N tried. "Heather?"

Again, there was no response. The further they got into the house, the colder it started to get.

"Jesus, it's freezing." Nancy commented as they walked further in.

"Do you guys smell that?" Y/N asked as they came to the end of the hall. There was a strong chemical smell coming from the direction of the kitchen.

They walked towards the kitchen and as they rounded the corner the

smell became overwhelming. All of the counter tops were covered in various empty bottles of household cleaners, bleach and every other type of chemical it was easy to get your hands on. One of the counters looked as though it had been physically ripped out of the wall.

“Oh god.” Nancy said, covering her mouth as she walked further into the kitchen. “More chemicals.”

Jonathan picked up one of the containers off the side. “Do you think they’re guzzling this shit?”

“Yeah, either that, or they just went on a hell of a cleaning spree.” Nancy joined Jonathan looking at the containers.

“But last year, Will didn’t eat chemicals. Did you?” Max piped up.

Will’s eyes were trained on the containers. “No, this is something new.”

“Mr Clarke, fifth grade. Posit. What happens when you mix chemicals together?” Mike said, glancing between Lucas and Will.

“You create a new substance.” Will and Lucas answered together.

“What if they’re making something?” Mike proposed.

“In themselves?” Max looked disgusted. “I mean, come on, if you drink this crap, it’ll kill you.”

“Yeah, if you’re human.” Lucas said.

Y/N moved out of the kitchen and into the dining room. She froze in the doorway as she noticed the table was exactly the same as it had been when her and the girls had left the other night. The cookies Heather had baked were still sat on the edge of the table, the wine glasses were half full and half eaten plates of food were still in place.

“Guys!” She called as she walked further into the room. When they walked in, she was crouched on the floor. “This is blood.” She gestured to the carpet and a wine bottle next to it on the floor.

Nancy crouched down next to her. "Yesterday, Tom had a bandage on his forehead." She reached for the wine bottle and stood up. "He was attacked."

"By Billy and Heather." Y/N stood and looked back at the table. "The tables exactly how it was when we left the other night."

She remembered the rug they'd seen when they walked in and walked up to it. Someone had definitely been dragged across the floor. There was more blood on the floor nearby, leading to what looked like the entrance to the garage. She glanced at the others to tell them, but they were already following her. Nancy nodded and she pulled the door open. The garage was mostly empty apart from a length of rope in the middle of the garage floor.

Jonathan knelt down to examine it as the others came through the door. "They must have tied them." He stood up. "They must have taken them somewhere."

"Mrs Driscoll." Nancy said. "She kept saying, 'I have to go back'. What if the flaying, it's taking place somewhere else? There must be a place where this all started, right? A source."

"Somewhere he didn't want me to see." El said.

"If we can find the source, then maybe we can stop him. Or at least stop it from spreading or doing whatever the hell he's doing with those chemicals." Nancy said.

"How do we find it?" El asked.

They all turned to look at Y/N.

"Where did you and Billy crash?" Nancy asked.

"I don't know." Y/N couldn't meet their eyes. "I don't even know what road we were on. It was dark and we were laughing so I wasn't paying attention. I know I should have been but I wasn't. We just wanted to get dinner." She chuckled but it lacked all humour.

"Okay, okay, we can figure it out another way." Nancy assured her before furrowing her eyebrows together.

“Mrs Driscoll.” Will spoke up from the back of the garage. “If she wants to go back so badly, why don’t we just let her.”

## 19. The Hospital

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3, violence, blood, hospitals

By the time they got to the hospital, it was already dark. Y/N grabbed some more painkillers out of the glove compartment to stop the throbbing in her head before meeting up with the others. They followed Nancy into the hospital. The receptionist seemed pretty engrossed in a phone call.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! Excuse me!” The receptionist called out as they tried to walk past her. “Where do you think you’re going?” She stood up, placed her hand on her hip and raised her eyebrows.

“Oh um, I was just going to visit my grandma again. And this-this is my family.” Nancy gestured to everyone else.

“Extended.” Lucas added with a smile as the receptionist looked at him sceptically.

“I don’t care who they are, you know the rules. Only three visitors at a time.” The receptionist said.

“Yeah, but-”

The receptionist cut Nancy off. “Three!” She sat back down and started talking on the phone again. “Girl, this child has lost her mind. She brought a whole zoo in here.”

Nancy, Jonathan and Y/N convinced the kids to stay put before they got in the elevator and Nancy pressed the floor button. The music playing did nothing to alleviate the tension Y/N could feel coming from Jonathan and Nancy. She moved to the very back to try and give them some space.

“You know, those things that I said yesterday, I-I didn’t mean them.” Nancy said.

"I know." Jonathan assured her.

"I don't think you're like those assholes. At all. I never have. I-I was just..."

"Angry?" Jonathan suggested. "Which I still don't get. I mean, I was just completely, utterly, mortifyingly wrong." They looked at each other. "Don't let that go to your head."

"I won't." Nancy smiled. "I just look forward to you never doubting me again."

Y/N breathed a sigh of relief when the elevator dinged and the doors opened. The three of them got out and Nancy led the way down the hall. As they neared the nursing station, they could tell something was wrong. There were papers dropped onto the floor, there was no one around and everything was eerily silent. They reached the door and Nancy opened it and walked in, Jonathan and Y/N following. But they all froze when they realised the bed was empty. A flower vase on the table at the bottom of the bed had been knocked over and was dripping water all over the floor.

"Where is she?" Jonathan asked.

"I don't know." Nancy said as she walked further into the room.

"Are you sure this is the right room?" Y/N asked as Nancy picked up the clipboard that was hanging over the edge of the bed.

"Yeah." Nancy said as she checked the name.

"She's gone home." Tom, Heather's dad, suddenly appeared in the doorway.

The three teenagers all spun round and Y/N took several steps back until she was just in front of Jonathan and Nancy. They all noticed the blood on Tom's arms at the same time and started moving backwards, further into the room.

"We were hoping you might come back." Tom smiled and started walking forward.

“Whose blood is that?” Jonathan shifted so he was stood in front of the two girls as they continued backing up.

“Tom, whatever you’ve done, it’s not you.” Nancy tried. “He’s making you do this.”

Y/N knew from trying to plead with Billy in the sauna that talking to him wouldn’t work. As Tom got within a foot of them, she pushed Jonathan aside and grabbed the vase off the table. She slammed it straight into the side of Tom’s face and he went flying into the wall. “C’mon!” She screamed to Jonathan and Nancy as she bolted out of the door.

They didn’t get far though as Jonathan ran straight into her as she stopped dead in the corridor. Another of the men from the newspaper was stood there with black lines spreading across his face that matched where she’d just hit Tom with the vase.

“Owie.” He brought his hand to his head as they noticed he too, was covered in blood.

“Go, go, go!” Jonathan pushed Nancy backwards and he grabbed Y/N’s arm as the guy started walking towards them.

They sprinted down the hall and into the stairwell at the end. Jonathan slammed the door behind the three of them as they started running down the stairs. When they hit the bottom, Nancy ran through the door with Y/N and Jonathan close behind. The first thing they saw was a nurse laying on the floor surrounded by blood. They started pushing faster with a quick glance behind them to confirm that the guy was still following them. The further they got down the corridor, the more bodies they started passing.

“This way, this way!” Jonathan grabbed their arms and directed them down another corridor before they all started running again.

The corridor was mid-construction and they had to be careful of paint cans and wooden planks along the floor. They stopped again when they came to a cross roads. All of them were panting as Jonathan spotted an intercom. “Hello? Hello?”

“Here!” Y/N grabbed the other two and pulled them into a room.

Jonathan locked the door as Y/N ran up to the window and Nancy ran to the phone. “It’s ringing!”

But what they didn’t know was that the receptionist was still busy talking on the phone.

“C’mon! Pick up!” Nancy screamed in frustration.

“Nancy!” Jonathan said as the lights started flickering.

They all jumped as the window in the door smashed and the guy stuck his head through. “Hi there.” He reached his arm through the window and undid the lock. He started to walk through the door. Y/N didn’t even think, she turned to the others. “Run!”

Jonathan didn’t have time to ask what she meant before she threw herself at the guy. In any other situation her plan wouldn’t have worked, but she caught him off guard and her momentum sent them both flying through the door.

Nancy and Jonathan ran to the door.

“Get out of here! Find Eli!” Y/N screamed at them and felt relief wash over her when they listened. The guy got back to his feet but she landed a solid punch to his jaw. But this time he was expecting it and he barely flinched. Her eyes went wide as he grabbed her and threw her into the wall. All the air left her lungs as her back made contact with the wall. She gasped for air as he started walking towards her.

But a voice that echoed through the corridor stopped him. “No, go after the other two.”

“No.” Y/N croaked as the guy started the way Nancy and Jonathan had gone. She tried to grab his leg but before she could, two hands were lifting her up from the floor and slamming her into the wall. She knew who it was before he’d even brought her to his eye level.

“Hey, princess.” Billy smirked at her as he pinned her to the wall. He was wearing a white vest which meant she could see the marks on his arms from the sauna test, as well as the one on his cheek, and they

had all turned jet black.

“Get off me!” She tried to throw him off but he just pushed her back into the wall harder.

“That’s not very nice, Y/N.” He shifted his arm to her throat and added enough pressure to have her clawing at it with her good hand.

“Billy, please, don’t do this.” It was then she noticed his eyes. Everything else about his demeanour was threatening, but his eyes were glassy and pained. They didn’t match the borderline psycho smile on his face.

He leaned forward and rested his cheek against hers. She screwed her eyes shut to stop the tears as he spoke directly into her ear. “I’ve got something to show you, it’ll be easier and less painful if you don’t struggle.” He pulled back and smiled again but she noticed a few tears slip out of his eyes. He grabbed her from the wall and started half carrying, half dragging her towards the exit.

“No!” She tried to get purchase with her feet but it was useless. The tears were free flowing down her cheeks at this point. She clawed at his arms around her but with one arm in a cast it was impossible. “Billy please! Please, you promised! Billy you promised!”

She felt it then. His grip on her loosened ever so slightly. But it was enough so she could find purchase with her feet and slam her elbow into his stomach. He doubled over and released her completely. She used her good hand to push him to the floor and then she just started running in the direction Nancy and Jonathan had gone.

“This isn’t over! We will find you Y/N!” Billy’s voice echoed through the halls as she kept running.

She rounded a corner and ran straight into someone. As soon as she realised it was Jonathan, she let out a sob of relief and practically collapsed into him.

“Y/N?” He wrapped his arms around her shoulders as she cried into his shoulder.

“Jesus, we thought Bruce had killed you.” Nancy said as she joined

the hug.

“Billy- Billy stopped him.” She sobbed.

“What?” Max chimed in. “Billy’s back?”

“No,” Y/N pulled back from Jonathan. “he wanted to take me somewhere, he started dragging me towards the door.”

“He wanted to flay you!” Mike practically shouted.

Y/N nodded. “He’s still in there though. Billy, I mean. He was crying and when I mentioned the promise he made me, his grip loosened and I managed to get away.”

“Promise?” Nancy asked, resting her hand on Y/N’s shoulder.

“He promised he’d never hurt me.” She said as she wiped the tears from her face. “Where’s Tom and that other guy?”

“They kinda-”

“They fused into a monster thing!” Mike cut Jonathan off. “And then El threw them out a window.”

“Yeah, I think we should head home.” Jonathan said. They were all quick to agree.

## 20. The Cabin

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3

After everything that happened at the hospital, they all realised they were up against a lot more than they could ever have imagined. They came to the decision that Jonathan would drive Y/N's car, because she was in no shape to drive, and would take Y/N, Will and El to Y/N's house so she could change, as Nancy took the others to her so she could change too. Then they would all meet up at Hopper's cabin to figure out where they were going to go from here.

The Jonathan, Y/N, EL and Will arrived first and El had just finished getting changed when Nancy pulled up outside. As they walked in, Nancy handed El a bingo pamphlet with Mrs Driscoll's picture on it and a picture of Bruce from the newspaper. Y/N handed over a family picture she had picked up in the Holloway's house and the strip of photobooth pictures that had fallen out of Billy's locker. Then they set everything up as usual in El's room and left her to it.

"It can't be good for her to be in there for this long." Mike exclaimed after about fifteen minutes, gesturing towards El's closed door as he paced back and forth in the living room.

"Mike, you need to relax." Max rested her arms on her knees as she rocked her heels back and forth while sat in one of the arm chairs.

"What if she gets brain damage or something?" Mike countered.

"Oh shit! Is that, like, a real thing?" Lucas asked, taking a break from eating Honey Smacks straight from the box as he leaned back on the sofa.

Max rolled her eyes. "No, it's not. He made it up. Mike doesn't know what the hell he's talking about."

"Oh! And you do?" Mike stopped his pacing to face her.

"No, I-..." Max tried to come up with an answer.

Y/N stopped paying attention to their bickering as Nancy started another conversation on the phone.

“Yes, from The Hawkins Post. I-I called a couple of days ago about the... Yes, yes. Um, I was just following up to see if anything else had gone missing, or if...Okay. Um, sorry to bother you.” She slammed the phone back on the stand as Max and Mike continued to argue.

“You okay?”

It took Y/N a minute to realise that Jonathan was talking to her.

“I’m going to take that as a no.” Jonathan smiled and leant on the opposite side of the kitchen island from where her and Will were sitting.

Y/N tried to return it. “It’s just... Everything’s all over the place. The last two times we’ve had some direction but this time... I’m worried about Billy.” She bit her lip and looked at the ceiling to try and stop another set of tears falling.

“We’ll figure it out. Alright? We always do.” He smiled again before Nancy walked over.

“Who’s next?”

“There is no next. Unless you want to start calling random people’s homes.” Jonathan told her as he crossed out the place she’d just called in the phone book.

“It doesn’t make sense!” Nancy said, throwing her notebook down on the kitchen island.

“What part of any of this makes any sense?” Y/N asked, suddenly very aware of the pain in her shoulders. She reached into her bag and took another couple of painkillers with the glass of water Jonathan had given her a while ago.

“There’s a pattern, okay? A consistency to their behaviour.” Nancy looked between the three of them sat in the kitchen. “They’ve been feeding on these chemicals since this started, and-and what? They just stop, out of the blue?”

"Maybe they have all the chemicals they need." Will spoke up.  
"Maybe they've all turned into those... things."

"But what about the source? I mean, did the mind flayer just suddenly stop infecting people? And even if the flayed are monsters now, why can't El find of them?" Nancy rattled off.

"Okay, can you guys settle an argument for us?" Max walked into the kitchen with Mike behind her. "Who do you think should decide El's limits? Mike, or Eleven?"

"The way that you frame that is such bullshit!" Mike said.

Y/N stood up and walked over to the window. She couldn't deal with any more arguing. She just wanted answers. She just wanted Billy back.

"What's going on?" EL's voice brought everyone out of their various states as they all turned to look at her.

"Nothing! Nothing." Mike said a little too quickly.

"Just a family discussion." Lucas added.

"Oh. I found him." El said.

"Found who?" Y/N walked back over to everyone.

El looked directly at her. "Billy."

Y/N felt her heart stop. "Where is he?"

"At his house." EL told her.

She grabbed her car keys and had almost made it to the door when Nancy grabbed her unbroken arm.

"Where are you going?"

"To go see him. He's still in there Nancy, I can bring him back, I know I can."

"He nearly killed you, Y/N. Twice from what I can tell. We need

more information before we go charging into anything.” Nancy’s grip was firm as she raised her eyebrows, daring Y/N to challenge her.

“Fine, but he only tried to kill me once, the crash was an accident.” Y/N put her keys back in her pocket and let Nancy drag her back into the living room area. Everyone was sat around El, who was sat cross legged in front of the static TV again. When Nancy and Y/N were settled, she tied the bandana around her head again.

It was around five minutes later that she ripped the blindfold back off.

“What’s he doing now?” Max asked as El stood up and walked into the kitchen.

“He’s just sitting, in his room.” El grabbed a glass, filled it with water and then gulped down the whole thing.

“And that’s not normal right?” Nancy asked, her eyes drifting from Max to Y/N.

“Billy staying in his room on the fourth of July? No, that’s not normal.” Max said.

“We were supposed to be going to the fair.” Y/N remembered, even though she knew that was never going to happen right now. She ignored the pain piercing her heart and tried to analyse the situation. “He wants us to find him.”

“Yeah, that’s what I was afraid of.” Nancy said, looking directly at Y/N. “If we go to Billy, then the rest of the flayed know where we are.”

“It’s a trap, I agree. We’ll be ambushed.” Mike chimed in.

“We won’t be surprised. We’ll know that they’re coming and we’ll kick their flayed butts.” Lucas said with sheer confidence.

“You mean El will kick their butts.” Max reminded him.

“It’s too risky.” Mike said

“Yeah, and unnecessary.” Nancy backed up her brother. “Killing the

played won't kill the mind flayer. We have to find out where it's spreading from and top it. We have to find the source."

"Which only one of us has visited, and I can't even remember it." Y/N reminded them.

"Billy knows it." El said. "Billy's been there. To the source. He was awake, after the crash?"

Y/N nodded. "Yeah, he was. He was covered in dirt and grime and really panicked when I came too in the car. Looked like he'd been dragged across the floor."

"Yeah, but-" Mike started.

"It's a trap." El finished. "I know. We can't go to Billy, but I think there's another way. A way for me to see where he's been."

They got everything set up again in the living room. Mike tried to talk her out of it one more time before she went in, but she assured him she would be fine.

*Billy sat on his bed with his hands resting on his knees. His eyes were trained straight ahead at his bedroom wall. As El walked closer she could see the cuts from the sauna test seemed to be an even darker shade of black than before. He was still in the white vest and jeans from the hospital. She took shuddering breaths as she got close enough to truly see him. Y/N had been right. His eyes were pained, but the rest of his face and body language was neutral.*

*El reached forward and took his hand. He didn't even seem to notice as she lifted his arm up. The scratches Y/N had left at the hospital were littered down his forearm. They had all turned black too. "Billy?" El spoke softly. "Can you hear me? I want to see. I want to see what happened." That seemed to get through to him. He raised his gaze to meet hers. His eyes were glassy with unshed tears. But then his face went hard and he grabbed El's forearm in a vice like grip. She started to panic as she tried to pull her arm from his grip.*

El's breathing was increasing sharply and none of them knew why.

"Something's wrong!" Mike said, but no one made any attempt to

move; none of them knew what to do.

*El fought harder and harder to try and pull her arm out of Billy's grip. But he held fast.*

*"Stop! No! No! No! No! NO!" El screamed as she managed to yank her arm back. But in doing so, she sent herself falling backwards.*

*It felt like she was falling in slow motion. As she fell there were flashes. Flashes of memory. The sauna test. The mind flayer. Y/N pushing her out of the way before Billy's hand could close around her throat. The mind flayer. Heather's parents being taken and flayed. The mind flayer. Billy standing over Heather in the basement. The mind flayer. Billy watching them leave the Holloway's after they had interrupted dinner. The mind flayer. Heather in the ice bath at his house. The mind flayer. Heather being dragged down. The mind flayer. Billy being flayed. Billy flaying Heather. Billy being dragged down into the basement. The mind flayer. The crash.*

*She hit the floor and was immediately engulfed by a wave. She pushed herself onto her front as she looked around. She was no longer in the upside down, well, not the one she was used to. She was on a beach. She looked to the side as a flock of seagulls took off into the air, cawing to each other as they did so. She struggled to her feet and looked around in confusion.*

"El? Are you okay?" Mike was getting worried.

She let out a shaky breath. "I'm okay."

Everyone released the breathes they had been holding.

"What's going on?" Mike pressed.

"I'm... On a beach." She sounded as confused as everyone felt.

"Okay, I may be dense, but the last time I checked, there weren't any beaches in Hawkins." Lucas said.

"What else do you see?" Max asked.

*As El looked around again, a woman came into focus. She was tall,*

*blonde and beautiful. She was wearing a long white swimsuit cover and had a pair of yellow sandals and a straw sunhat in her hand.*

*"A woman. She's... Pretty." El smiled. "I... I think she's looking at me."*

*The woman smiled in El's direction and started to wave. "Whooo! Yeah!"*

*It was then that El noticed the woman was looking behind her. A boy, somewhere between ten and twelve, came running out of the sea with a surf board under his arm. He dropped the board in the sand and ran up to the woman.*

*"You did it!" She exclaimed as he reached her.*

*"There's... A boy." El told them.*

*"Did you see that?" The boy asked.*

*"Yeah, I saw that!" The woman replied before resting her hand on the back of his head and kissing his forehead.*

*"That was at least seven feet!" It was easy to see the excitement in the boy's eyes and face.*

*"I don't know what it was, but it almost gave me a heart attack." The woman smiled again.*

*"Ten more minutes?" The boy asked.*

*The woman tried to keep her face happy, but there was worry in her eyes. "Yeah, okay, ten more minutes."*

*"Okay!" The boy raced back to his surf board with a smile on his face.*

*"But any longer than that, dad's going to be mad, okay?" There was an edge of panic to her voice.*

*"Okay!" The boy was too busy in his element to notice it.*

*"Billy?" The woman called out as El's eyes went wide. "Watch out for rip currents!"*

*"I know!" Billy called as he ran into the sea.*

"It's Billy." El said.

"It's California." Max realised. "It's a memory."

Y/N reached over and took her hand. The red head looked up at her and squeezed her hand back as she noticed the older girl's eyes getting glassy.

*El watched from the beach as Billy paddled his surf board back out away from the shore. But her eyes were drawn away by the distant rumbling of thunder and flashes of red lightning.*

"I think I see it." El said. "The source."

*Everyone looked at each other and sat up straighter.*

*The sky above the beach was clear, but in the distance, dark clouds, tinged with red were forming. El cast one more look out to sea before setting off towards where the clouds had formed. The closer she got, the more the wind seemed to pick up, until it was whipping around her.*

"Hey! Billy, stop!" A man's voice screamed over the wind.

*El turned to look as the young Billy walked towards her. He was in full baseball gear and the man was storming after him, baseball bat held under his arm.*

"What the hell is wrong with you!" Neil caught up to him and grabbed his arm, hard. "What did we talk about, huh? You gotta slide!"

"I-I-I Know." Billy stammered.

"Wait, afraid you're gonna get hurt, is that it?" Neil scoffed.

"No!" The panic in Billy's voice was building.

"Well, what then? What?" Neil's voice was getting louder. "What did I raise, a pussy for a son?"

"Leave me alone!" Billy ripped his arm from Neil's grip and started running.

*"Hey! That's right, run! Like you always do!" Neil screamed after him.*

*El started after Billy, turning to glare at Neil as she passed. The wind was getting even stronger and the clouds were swirling around her.*

*"Where were you last night? Where were you?" El couldn't pinpoint where Neil's voice was coming from due to the clouds.*

*"I told you, I was with Wendy!" Billy's mom shouted back.*

*"Stop lying to me!"*

*"I'm not lying to you!"*

*"You saw him again, didn't you?" Neil finally came into view. He was gripping Billy's mom's arm as Billy sat at the kitchen table, watching everything unfold. "Didn't you!"*

*Billy's mom ripped her arm back and pushed Neil back. "Get away from me! I said get away!" She threw a plate as Neil tried to get close again.*

*"You- you whore!" There was venom dripping from Neil's voice.*

*"Stop it!" Billy screamed as he got in between his parents.*

*"Bitch!" Neil moved towards Billy's mom.*

*"Don't hurt her!" Billy grabbed Neil's waist and tried to push him back.*

*"No!" Billy's mom screamed.*

*"Don't hurt her!" Billy said again.*

*"You bastard!" Billy's mom shouted as Neil threw Billy to the floor and punched Billy's mom in the face.*

*"Mom!" Billy screamed as he got back to his feet.*

*"I don't understand. Why not?" It was Billy's voice again but it wasn't coming from the scene in front of El. She spun around and tried to find the source in the clouds. "Please, mom, don't do this. Please come home." Billy pleaded. El caught sight of him sat on the floor, leaning against a bed with the phone to his ear. "No, how long? How long! I miss you." Billy*

*was getting more desperate as sobs racked through his chest.*

*“Get back here!”*

*El turned to try and find the source of the new voice. Her eyes landed on a young teenage Billy on top of another teenage boy. Billy was repeatedly punching the other kid in the face.*

*“Get up! What, are you scared to fight me?” Billy yelled at the boy. “You scared? Get up and fight me, pussy. Pussy!”*

*El watched with glassy eyes as the sweet boy from the beach began to change into an unrecognisable person.*

*“Billy, come over here. I want you to meet someone.” Neil came back into focus. He was walking towards Billy, with his hand on a young Max’s shoulder. “This is your new sister. Her name’s Maxine.”*

*“Max.” Max corrected him.*

*“Shake her hand.”*

*The clouds suddenly broke. El found herself face to face with Y/N.*

*“Y/N?” El muttered.*

*“What is it?” Y/N shifted forward.*

*“I can see you. You-You’re walking down a road. It’s night. You’re... Alone.”*

*Y/N’s voice caught in her throat. “That... That’s the night we met.”*

*El watched as Y/N pushed her hands further in her hoodie’s pocket. She was clearly cold. She jumped as a car engine cut through the calm night air. El watched as she moved to the side to let the car go past. To El’s surprise the car pulled up.*

*“Y/N, right?” Billy was smiling, but there was a bruise forming under his left cheekbone.*

*Y/N nodded.*

*"What you doing out this late in the cold, princess?"*

*"Couldn't sleep." Y/N shrugged as Billy's eyes surveyed her shivering figure.*

*"Want to come for a drive? I'd rather not leave you out here in the cold." He reached over and opened the passenger side door without waiting for an answer. "You shouldn't be out here alone, it's dangerous."*

*As Y/N got into the car the clouds descended again. El spun and found Y/N kneeling in front of Billy with tears streaming down her cheeks and her hands gripping his shirt. Billy was bloody and beaten and there were tears in his eyes too. Steve was on the floor behind Y/N, not moving.*

*"Stop, don't become your dad. Billy please." Y/N pleaded with him. "I meant what I said; I love you."*

*"You can't just say that and then disappear with someone else!" Billy's voice was broken.*

*The clouds vanished again and El found herself stood in Billy's room. Y/N was leaning over the side of his bed, looking through the paperbacks that she had pulled out from under his bed. Billy was laid behind her on the bed, holding a book above him as he read it. El had never seen either of them so calm.*

*"Hey, what's this?" Y/N's fingers gripped the spine of a very beat up copy of The Catcher in the Rye. She sat up on the bed and opened the book; photographs falling out as she did.*

*"I didn't know where else to put them." Billy put his book down and sat up next to her. He rested his weight on his left arm, next to her hip as he rested his head on her shoulder and reached for the top picture.*

*El moved closer to get a look. Most of the pictures were of Y/N and Billy, a few of just Y/N, but there was one of Billy and his mom. Y/N picked that one up. Billy noticed her looking at it.*

*"That was just before she left." His voice dropped almost to a whisper.*

*"I'm not going anywhere, you know that, right?" Y/N turned to look at him.*

*He moved his hand to her face and brushed his thumb over her cheekbone. "I know. I promise we'll never be like that; I won't be like him. I will never hurt you; I promise." He leaned forward and kissed her. Her hands moved to his hair before he pulled back and rested his forehead on hers. "I promise."*

*"Who's there?" The clouds engulfed everything again as Billy shouted.*

*"I'm not going anywhere." Y/N's voice rang out.*

*El spun around in circles but couldn't see either of them.*

*"I said who's there!" Billy screamed as he was pulled to the ground.*

*But El still couldn't see him. She pushed through the clouds as the wind picked back up. She had to raise her arm to protect her eyes. Billy continued screaming as El could finally make out the Camaro's headlights. She started moving faster as the screaming got louder. But it suddenly stopped as she broke through into the eye of the storm. She looked around at the old steelworks and saw the Camaro against one of the walls. The lightning and thunder picked up again as she walked towards the main building.*

*"I think I found it. The source." El said as all the others leaned forward.*

*"Where El? Where are you?" Max asked.*

*"Brimborn... Steelworks."*

*Jonathan shot to his feet and ran over to the kitchen island. When he came back, he was clutching the phone book in his hand. "Here. Okay, uh, steelworks, steelworks." He started flicking through the pages as Nancy got up to join him. "Here steel. Uh, found it! 6522 Cherry Oak Drive."*

*"That's close." Nancy said.*

*"El, El, we found it. Get out of there. Get out!" Mike said.*

*El heard him but as she closed her eyes, she felt herself falling back up. As she did, she saw the crash, she saw Billy trying to wake Y/N up, saw him*

*getting dragged into the basement. She saw Heather again, and everything that had happened to her, and everything else she had seen while she was falling, just in reverse.*

*El ripped the blindfold off and looked around the cabin, only to find that she was alone. "Mike? Mike?" She didn't understand where everyone could have gone when Mike was just speaking. She pushed herself to her feet as she started to panic. "Mike! Mike! Mike!"*

*"He can't hear you."*

*El spun around to try and find the source of the voice. Her eyes landed on her open bedroom door as a shadow appeared on the wood, before Billy stepped into view. El took a step back on reflex as he paused in the doorway.*

*"You shouldn't have looked for me." It was the same as before, his voice seemed to have an edge, like multiple people were talking at once. "Because now I see you." He crushed his cigarette in the ashtray on the hall table as he started towards El. "Now we all see you."*

*El started backing up, panic clawing up her throat as she looked at the boy who was so broken and alone. Who had finally managed to catch a break but the world seemed determined to not let him have it.*

*"You, let us in and now, you are going to have to let us stay." Billy kept advancing as El took steps back. It was then she noticed his eyes and recalled what Y/N had said. Tears were forming along his lash lines. Billy, the real Billy, was still in there, watching all of this and fighting so hard to break free.*

*"Don't you see? All this time, we've been building it."*

*El could no longer hold in the sobs that racked through her chest. She didn't know how to get out.*

*"We've been building it, for you." The tears finally began to fall. He was in pain.*

*"What are you doing?" Mike shouted as Y/N moved towards El. "You can't touch her when she's in there!"*

*“We have to do something! Look at her! I have to try!”*

*El felt something grasp her hand and when she looked up, Y/N was standing next to her. Y/N’s eyes grew wide as she looked around the cabin and then met Billy’s eyes.*

*“Billy?” Her voice was soft and pained.*

*The mind flayer didn’t seem phased, but there was a slight change in Billy’s eyes as he looked at her. El tugged Y/N back as Billy carried on towards him.*

*“All that work, all that pain, all of it, for you.”*

*El and Y/N hit the kitchen island and Y/N pulled her to the side. But they were running out of room to move.*

*“El, you have to do something.” Y/N’s eyes never left Billy as she felt tears starting to fall down her own cheeks. El didn’t appear to have heard her over her own sobbing and focus on Billy.*

*“And now, it’s time. Time to end it. And we’re going to end you. And when you are gone, we’re going to end her,” Billy’s gaze moved back to Y/N, who gripped El’s hand tighter. “and all of your friends.”*

*“No!” El screamed.*

*“And then we are going to end everyone.”*

*El finally snapped out of it and threw up the hand that wasn’t holding Y/N’s. “GET AWAY!”*

*Billy was thrown backwards.*

*“NOOOOOO!” El screamed as she ripped the actual bandana off.*

*Y/N fell back, breathing hard, as Mike grabbed El and pulled her into him. Nancy and Jonathan grabbed hold of Y/N’s arms and pulled her up.*

*“What happened?” Nancy asked.*

## 21. The Mind Flayer

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3, blood and injury

“He said he was building something.” El told everyone when she had calmed down enough. “That it was all for me.”

“Building something? Is he talking about the flayed?” Max wondered.

“He must be. He said something similar after the crash.” Y/N said as she rested her head in her hands.

“So, he’s building an army, just like we thought.” Lucas started pacing back and forth behind the sofa.

“Yeah, but he’s not building this army to spread.” Mike said.

“He’s building it to stop Eleven.” Will added.

Mike nodded. “Last year, El closed the gate on him. I have a feeling that really pissed him off.”

“Like, royally.” Lucas agreed as he stopped pacing.

“And the mind flayer now knows that she’s the only thing that can stop him.” Mike said. “But if she’s out of the way...”

“Game over.” Lucas finished.

“He also said, that he was... going to kill all of you.” El’s gaze drifted across everyone in the room, remembering everything they had all done to help her over the last couple of years.

“Yeah, well, that’s nice.” Max said as everyone else shared worried looks.

A faint noise in the distance caught Nancy’s attention and she stood up and walked over to the window. It sounded again, like faint screeching, but was difficult to distinguish from the fireworks they

were letting off at the fair. “Do you guys hear that?”

The others sat up straighter and strained their ears to see if they could hear what Nancy was hearing in amongst the fireworks.

“It’s just the fireworks.” Jonathan said after a moment of listening.

Nancy didn’t seem convinced as she spun back around to face them. “Billy... When he told you this, it was here, in this room?”

“Yeah.” Y/N said as El nodded, and then it clicked in Y/N’s mind. “He knows where we are.” She shot to her feet as fear started to spread through the room.

“Yeah, he knows we’re here.” Will’s hand drifted to the back of his neck.

“We’ve got to go.” Y/N said, as she pulled her keys out of her pocket.

Nancy grabbed her keys and then followed Y/N to the door. They walked straight out with Jonathan and the kids hot on their heels. They made it down to where the cars were parked, the fireworks periodically illuminating everything around them in various colours, when they noticed movement at the top of the road. It looked exactly like Will’s drawing from last year; towering with huge legs, like a spider. It was ripping up trees as it came towards them and was moving very fast.

“Back inside!” Y/N grabbed Nancy and ushered the kids and Jonathan back towards the cabin. “El, I don’t suppose Hopper keeps any guns here?”

“In the shed.” EL pointed over to it.

Jonathan ushered the kids inside as Nancy went to grab the shotgun from the shed and Y/N grabbed the wood cutting axe. Y/N walked back inside to see the kids were blocking the windows with tables and chairs, moving bookcases and shelves in front of doors, and trying to make the cabin as secure as they could. When Nancy had come back in, Y/N and Jonathan pushed the sofa up on its edge and barricaded the door.

“Hey, get away from the windows!” Nancy called to Mike as they all formed a circle in the centre of the room, waiting and wondering where the first attack would come from.

The lights started flickering as the cabin started to shake. It was soft at first, just the lamp shades rocking, but then it started to get harder, things started falling off shelves and everything started to rattle.

“It’s close.” Will said, as the trees directly outside of the cabin started creaking.

A mug fell off the rack on the wall and shattered in the floor, causing them all to jump. They could tell it was getting nearer but with all the windows boarded up, they had no idea where it actually was and that was setting them even more on edge.

Then, all of a sudden, everything stopped and it went quiet.

“Where’d it go?” Max asked, voicing everyone’s concern as they all looked at each other.

Suddenly, one of the creature’s arms came through the wall in the corner near the bookcase. They all cried out in surprise and jumped away from it as it moved further into the room. The end of the arm looked like one of those claw grabbers they have in amusement parks. It went to grab at Max, Eleven and Mike but Y/N swung the axe and connected with it. She pulled it out and slammed it down again and again until the arm moved back. Before she could swing the axe again, the arm swung, knocking her and Jonathan back into one of the cabinets. The axe went flying as they both fell to the floor. Jonathan grabbed Y/N’s arm and pulled her back as it started coming at them again.

Nancy fired the shot gun, drawing it away from Y/N and Jonathan and towards her. She reloaded as it came towards her and kept shooting it, ripping off chunks of flesh as she did. But then the gun jammed. She tried to unjam it as she moved backwards but it wouldn’t budge. Her back hit the wall and she closed her eyes, preparing for impact, but it never came. She slowly opened her eyes to see Eleven using her powers to pull it back.

The creature was shrieking but Eleven didn't let up and with a flick of her wrist she severed the end from the rest of the arm. The creature pulled its arm back through the hole in the wall.

"Holy shit." Max said.

They didn't get to take a breath though, because another one shot through the wall, straight at El. She held her arm up and stopped it as it tried to grab her as another shot through the opposite wall. She stopped that one too as the others looked on, feeling helpless. The creature was shrieking as it fought against her. El looked around at her friends and yanked her arms back into her body. Both of the creature's arms severed just as the first had, and they both retreated.

El was panting hard but before she could react, a much larger arm came through the ceiling and grabbed her ankle. It pulled back and El hit the floor before it started to lift her towards the hole in the ceiling and, to everyone's horror, the creature's mouth. Mike raced forward and grabbed both of her hands before she got too far off the ground. El started screaming from the strain and the claws ripping into the skin of her ankle as Y/N, Jonathan, Max and Will all ran forward to help Mike. Nancy started reloading the shotgun as Mike screamed at everyone to pull harder.

"Nancy shoot it!" Jonathan called out; his voice strained from the effort.

Nancy finished loading and started shooting. It seemed to anger the creature more than anything else.

"Come on! Lucas!" Max screamed as he looked on from the corner.

That seemed to snap him out of his daze. He grabbed the axe Y/N had dropped as Nancy kept shooting. He jumped up onto a side table and swung the axe at the arm. It connected and the creature shrieked so, he pulled it back out and swung again, and again, and again. At the same time Nancy kept shooting, El was still screaming, and the others were still pulling her back towards the ground. Lucas swung the axe one last time, severing the arm, and El and the others fell to the floor.

“El, El? You okay?” Mike asked. EL just nodded, too tired to talk.

“Holy shit.” Y/N breathed out as she noticed the end of the arm was not only still attached to El’s leg but was also still moving. She sat up and reached for it as Mike followed her lead. They looked at each other before they both grabbed it and yanked it off. El screamed as it tore a hole in her leg. Y/N threw the arm away from them and watched as it crawled back outside.

The creature shrieked again and started to push its head through the hole in the ceiling; it’s rows and rows of razor-sharp teeth on full display. Nancy went to reload the shotgun, but El shakily got to her feet with determination written clearly across her face. She screamed as she shot out both of her hands and started tearing the monsters head apart. The monster was shrieking and fighting but with one final push, El ripped its head in half.

“Go, go, go.” Y/N ushered the boys out as her and Max grabbed El.

“C’mon, c’mon, go!” Jonathan ripped the sofa off the door before opening it and making sure everyone got out.

Nancy and Jonathan got the boys in the station wagon as Y/N and Max got El into the Mustang. The creature was still shrieking and stumbling as both of the cars tore out of the driveway.

## 22. Convenience Store Clean Up

### Notes for the Chapter:

Warnings: Spoilers for season 3, blood and injury

As the cars tore into town, Y/N flashed her lights at Nancy and gestured for her to pull over as they approached a convenience store. El's leg was bleeding badly and needed to be treated sooner rather than later. Both cars came to a screeching stop outside the shop before everyone got out. Nancy grabbed a rock and threw it through one of the locked, glass doors as Y/N, Mike and Max helped get El out of the car.

They all followed Nancy through the door, Max and Mike supporting El, and made a beeline straight for the first aid aisle. Nancy grabbed a bottle of rubbing alcohol and gauze.

"Okay, get her down." Nancy said to Max and Mike. They glanced at each other before gently lowering El to the floor against one of the shelves.

"Okay," Nancy dropped to her knees by El's leg. "let me see." Nancy carefully rolled El's trouser leg up to reveal the bite.

"Oh shit." Max exclaimed as everyone else made similar comments.

Blood was oozing out of the puncture wounds and started to run onto the floor. It looked a lot worse than any of them were expecting and was worse than anything any of them had dealt with before.

Nancy started unwrapping some gauze but Max stopped her. "Hey, what-what are you doing?"

"I'm cleaning the wound." Nancy said reaching for the rubbing alcohol.

"No, first, we need to stop the bleeding, then clean, then disinfect, then bandage." Max said resting her hand on Nancy's to stop her, as Nancy looked at her with wide eyes.

“She’s right.” Y/N said dropping down next to them. “Skater kids know best.” She flashed Max a quick smile which Max reciprocated. “So, what do we need to do?” She had some experience cleaning Billy up but it was never as bad as this.

Max laid some of the gauze over the bite and then grabbed Mike’s hand. “Mike hold this. Keep the pressure on it, nice and firm, okay?”

El groaned as Mike did as he was asked.

“We’re going to need water, soap.” Max turned back to Nancy and Jonathan.

“Yeah, okay. Alright.” Nancy said as they got to their feet and went off looking.

A sudden clattering caused them to turn and see Lucas emptying the contents of his back pack all over the floor. “Does any of this help?”

“No! Go get me a wash cloth and a bowl.” Max ordered.

“A bowl?” Lucas repeated.

“Lucas. Go.” Max said sternly.

Will smacked his arm and started walking away, forcing Lucas to follow.

“You need me to do anything?” Y/N asked.

“Bandages and medical tape or something else to secure them.” Max said.

Y/N stood up and walked up to the shelf Nancy had grabbed the gauze from. She grabbed some bandages but there wasn’t any medical tape. She walked back over and handed Max the bandages. “I think I’ve got some medical tape in the kit in my car.”

She walked back outside and opened the boot of the car. As she shifted through all the junk her cast got caught on something and she made a mental reminder to clean it out tomorrow; if they survived the night that was. And it was one big if. It suddenly hit her just how

serious this was compared to the other things that they had faced. At least last time everyone was together. This time they had no idea where Joyce, Hopper, Steve and Dustin were. Or where Billy was her brain reminded her.

She pushed the thoughts out of her head as she located the first aid kit. She checked that there definitely was some medical tape before taking the whole thing inside with her. When she got back inside Mike was screaming into the walkie talkie.

“What happened?” Y/N asked as Nancy and Jonathan appeared at the other end of the aisle.

“It was Dustin, he was trying to tell me something about the gate but he kept cutting out.” Mike said.

“El, do you think you’ll be able to find him?” Y/N asked as she dropped to the floor in front of her and opened the first aid kit.

“Yes.” El nodded.

Y/N looked at Nancy. “Get Max, let’s get El’s leg strapped up and then figure out where Dustin is.”

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After they had successfully strapped El’s leg up, they moved her in front of the freezers. Mike found a bandana to use as a blindfold as Nancy and Y/N opened all the freezer door to create a low buzzing noise. Then they all took a few steps back and let El do her thing.

Until Lucas opened a can of new coke.

“Quiet.” Max hissed.

“Oh, sorry.” Lucas whispered back.

“How do you even drink that?” Mike asked in disgust.

“Because it’s delicious.” Lucas said.

“What?” Mike and Max said simultaneously.

Y/N and Nancy shared a glance because they couldn't believe they were going to have this argument at this time.

"It's like Carpenter's The Thing. The original, is a classic, no question about it. But the remake..." Lucas paused to slurp at the coke before giving a contented sigh. "Sweeter, bolder, better."

"You're insane." Mike stated.

"So, you prefer the original Thing?" Lucas asked.

"What? No! I'm not talking about The Thing; I'm talking about new coke." Mike said.

"It's the same concept, dude." Lucas said.

"Uh, actually, it's not the same concept." Mike said condescendingly.

"It is the same concept." Lucas shot back, their voices rising in volume.

"No, it's not."

"Yes, it is!"

"Hey!" El yelled as she ripped her blindfold off.

"Sorry." Mike said.

Prompting Lucas to do the same. "Sorry."

El just glared at them both.

"Did you... find him?" Mike asked.

"He's at the movies, in Starcourt." El said.

"Then let's go." Y/N said as she grabbed the first aid kit and her keys.

Lucas grabbed a shopping cart and loaded it with fireworks, which he said could be used against the mindflayer, while Mike helped El up. They loaded the fireworks into both cars before everyone got in as before. Y/N once again pulled out behind Nancy as they set off for

the mall.

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It wasn't too long after they had left that the Camaro pulled up in front of the convenience store. Billy' boots crunched on the broken glass as he walked into the store. His movement was almost robotic and his eyes were glazed over as he walked past each of the aisles, looking down them to make sure they were clear. He stopped at the end of the first aid aisle as he noticed all the dried blood and medical supplies on the floor. He crouched down and dipped his fingers in the blood that was still on the floor as the mindflayer came to life in his mind once again.